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BEIJING TODAY

FRIDAY DECEMBER 20, 2002

NO. 84

CN11-0120

HTTP://BJTODAY.YNET.COM



Lonely church stands firm in the face of development.

New Room for God

Church relocation could answer worshippers' prayers

By Zhao Hongyi

Sunday, December 15. Heavy snow was falling, making water-thirsty Beijing beautiful but freezing. At the southwest corner of Zhushikou, the first crossroad south from Tian'anmen Square, hundreds of local Christians were pouring out of the blue-gray painted Zhushikou Christian Church. But their cold red faces look comforted and relaxed. They have just finished attending a church service. Most of them are church volunteers, busy preparing for the coming Christmas Day.

The century old church used to be crowded in by shops and stores on the busiest street in the city. Now it stands alone at the crossroads surrounded by multi-lane roads amidst the falling snow, thanks to the municipal government's protection and preservation. But the eye-catching church is facing another challenge, again brought by the city's ambitious reconstruction plan.

Its future is still unclear.

Ups and downs

Dating from 1904, the Methodist Church was the first of eight Methodist churches built in Beijing from 1900. Construction took 17 years till 1921. It is noteworthy because from the very beginning, there have always been local reverends.

Hiram H. Lowry, a missionary from the US Wesleyan church, together with two local missionaries were instrumental in getting the project off the ground. Lowry devoted his life to missionary work in China in the 19th century, and spent his later life in the far west building churches and schools. The two Chinese men later became reverends of the church.

After 1949, the church remained in operation till 1967, the start of the Cultural Revolution. For the next 21 years, it remained closed.

In 1988, after China opened up to religion, the church was restored and opened to the public.

It has since been renovated on a further two occasions, in 1996 and 2002.

Too small for increasing congregation

Li Yonghong is a charming and enthusiastic lady. At first glance, you can't believe this energetic woman is the reverend and senior pastor of the church. Instead, she looks more like the often seen, warm-hearted "auntie" in the tens of thousands of residential communities throughout China.

Holder of a Christian religious studies master degree, Li told *Beijing Today* she experienced the last two reconstructions and the increasing fortunes of Christian Worship since she started work there in 1988.

Around 2,000 believers attend regular religious services each week. The number registered is much higher, because many of the congregation attend services in other churches in the city. The total number of regular churchgoers in Beijing is estimated at between 40,000 to 50,000, according to Li.

Li's church is a tiny three-story building with only 200 square meters on each floor. Li complains that the building is

too small. There is not enough space for all the worshippers to gather in the main second floor hall. Some have to stay in a hall on the ground floor, and others upstairs in one of three rooms on the third floor.

"We prefer to gather our members all together, but now we have to use video systems to link all the worshippers in the different halls to the Bishop's service in the main one. That's why you find so many TV sets here.

"Local media is quite interested in the arrangement, which is outside the traditional image of church they have," Li smiled. "It's a technical innovation to which we have no objection."

"We have our reasons to move"

In front of our reporter, Li first expressed her "sincere" thanks to the local government.

When the east-west Guang-qu-Guang'an road enlargement project started two years ago, the church was preserved, but the north side now faces the heavy traffic brought by the new road. The municipal government paid the 600,000 yuan cost for the third reinforcement work and decoration this year.

The church is prospering. But

the city is changing rapidly too.

The municipal government is planning to enlarge and reconstruct the north-south commercial street where the church is sited. This time, it seems the church will inevitably have to move.

Li seems quite happy with the project.

"I have seen the designs submitted under the government's public bidding. Two models suggest our church should be moved, but the other five have not mentioned it at all."

"I do hope our church could be moved to a larger place, but we can't move too far away from where we are now."

"Our church is just like a brand, named after the Zhushikou area. Therefore, you can't move our church too far away to a place no one knows."

Li also stressed many believers are elderly people. It is difficult enough for them to climb the stairs in the building. But the busy traffic on the street outside prevents them from attending church as frequently as they would like.

Final decision will come in a few months

Beijing Today contacted the city planning commission, which is responsible for the design evaluations. Chen Jianjun, a director of the commission acknowledged the Zhushikou project is on the cards.

"We have received seven design initiatives which are now on display for public feedback." But Chen emphasized however, he cannot give any details before the final decision is reached.

"From the government's point of view, we fully respect religious groups' views and requests, just as we have done previously in protecting the church.

Chen promised his commission would unveil the final decision in a few months, because "the project will start as early as next year".

EDITOR: LIU FENG DESIGNER: PANG LEI

Pepsi Scores Nil in China Football League

By Xiao Rong

China's first professional football league is facing the threat of losing one of its long-time patrons for the coming 2003 season.

Pepsi-China, chief sponsor since 1998 of the First Division Group A of Chinese National Football League announced last Thursday the termination of its cooperation with the League's general agent International Management Group (IMG).

In its unilateral statement, Pepsi-China attributed the sudden decision to IMG's repeated breach of the agreement between the two sides on the management and marketing of the League.

Yang Meihong, media spokeswoman for the Beijing office of Pepsi-China, who is in charge of the event, was unavailable. But *Beijing Today* managed to get further information from a marketing executive in the company's Shanghai office.

Canceling promotions and relegations of teams between divisions and failure to broadcast live on CCTV the first six rounds of the season were reasons cited by the Pepsi Executive, who refused to be named.

In addition, the Chinese Football Association (CFA) commenced negotiations with a rival soft drink company, Jianlibao, who wanted to buy Shenzhen Ping'an football club. This violated the terms of the agreement made with IMG that no other soft drink company would be allowed to sponsor the League.

"For the past four years, Pepsi has been paying an average of 10 million dollars each year for the League sponsorship rights, which turned out to be not as profitable as we had expected," the Pepsi executive added.

Most disappointing has been the total disregard of sponsor's rights on the part of IMG and CFA, said he.

IMG, as the sole agent of the League since it was launched in 1994, expressed their disappointment.

"There may have been some discrepancies in the implementation of our contracts, but we are not the only side to be blamed, as the Chinese Football Association is the sole management organization of the League," said Wang Yingquan, president of IMG China.

In Wang's view, it's the wrong time for Pepsi to terminate their agreement, with only a year left to run on the present contract. He added that the association will resume promotions and relegations in the League next year, which is sure to attract more attention and benefit League sponsors.

By announcing the end of cooperation with IMG, Pepsi-China didn't mean to stop supporting football in China, stressed the anonymous Pepsi executive. He said Pepsi was still dedicated to further development of the sport, especially in the field of youth football.

"Our original goal is both to improve China's football industry and to promote Pepsi's image by sponsoring the League. But the current environment in China for marketing and management of the sports industry is not so good, and it's really difficult for just one or two companies to make a change," he said.

Pepsi-China is not the only League sponsor that has complained about the marketing environment in Chinese football. Last June, Tom.com Ltd, a Hong Kong-based Internet Service Provider, also announced their decision to quit sponsoring the League due to lower than expected business returns.

Philips Electronics Group also ended their six-year-long sponsorship of the Chinese Football Association Cup in 2001, turning to the University Student Football League instead in the hope of cultivating future markets.

According to Dong Hua, press official of the CFA, the issue is only between IMG and Pepsi. The association has no direct relationship with Pepsi, as IMG is the only the organization authorized to seek sponsors for the League.

He said the association hoped that IMG could handle the problem by trying to communicate with Pepsi under the precondition of not influencing the coming 2003 season.

"The association shouldn't try to shift the responsibility for the failure of the deal. Though I'm not quite clear about the details, I can totally understand Pepsi's feelings for not getting the expected commercial benefits," commented Zhao Qing, vice manager of Beijing Mason Information Consultancy Company Ltd.

Zhao was one of China's first sports agents and got her qualification as early as 1999. Her company sponsored the 2000-2001 Luneng Cup in the Chinese Women's Table Tennis Premier League, only to end up with a deficit of nearly 100,000 yuan.

The bureaucratic style of China's sports administrations under the old framework of the planned economy and the lack of commercial consciousness to run the sports industry have resulted in the current dilemma in sports marketing, said Zhao.

"It's the Chinese Football Association that should best draw a lesson from the Pepsi incident," Zhao added. "Only when the association learns to strengthen the management of China's football industry and really respect the interests of sponsors, can the industry grow and attract more investment."

In the view of IMG, a global company dedicated to the marketing and management of sport, leisure and lifestyle for 42 years, the burgeoning sports industry in China still needs to be improved to create a better competitive environment.

"We chose the football industry to begin our marketing exploration in China because of its optimistic prospects," said Xu Nuo, event executive of IMG Beijing office.

Xu said his company is now negotiating with Pepsi-China in the hopes of resuming cooperation.

"Even if they eventually gave up, we could still manage to find another major sponsor for next year's League, but perhaps we couldn't get such a big offer as Pepsi pledged in 1998," said IMG-China president Wang Yingquan.



Li Yonghong gets ready for Christmas.

Photos by Jacky

China Adopts GDDS to Calculate GDP

China will begin to calculate and publish the total value of its economy using the universally practiced methods of other market economies in 3 to 5 years, Chinese chief statisticians said in Shanghai Wednesday.

Director of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Zhu Zhixin told a meeting of heads of local statistical bureaus from across the country that China will adopt a new system to calculate its national economy beginning in 2003.

Zhu said the new calculation system conforms with international practices in terms of classification and indices of eco-

nomics activities. He said that new content has been added to the system, including indices on restructuring, efficiency and sustainable economic growth.

China is currently experimenting with the calculation of its gross domestic product (GDP) using universal methods, said Xu Xianchun, director of the National Economic Statistics Department of the NBS. Xu said that within 3 to 5 years, China will be able to release GDP figures that are fully compatible with indices used in other market economies worldwide. These figures include fixed price-based GDP, quarterly GDP and GDP in terms of investment, con-

sumption and net exports.

Zhu said that over the past few years, China has made progress in the reform of statistical systems and methods.

During the past year, China embarked on a trial of calculating the growth of industrial output using an internationally practiced method instead of using the old planned-economy era method.

In order to update the traditional practice of collecting information through report forms at different levels, the NBS has set up a data gathering network that will effectively prohibit any possible intervention by local authorities.

China's efforts in this respect have

been recognized by the international community. The World Bank has decided to stop readjusting economic data provided by the Chinese government before using it.

China joined the general data distribution system (GDDS) sponsored by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in April 2002. The international community now has access to Chinese statistics through the Internet.

Zhu said that China is drafting a plan on additional reforms in the statistics system so as to bring it into compliance with international standards within the next few years. (Xinhua)

Save Great Wall

By Shan Jinliang

"China's symbol of civilization, the Great Wall, is now more than ever falling into ruins, and two-thirds of it are almost already gone," announced Dong Yaohui, secretary-general of the China Great Wall Society last week, upon completion of a 45-day investigation tour of the legendary 10,000 li (5,000 km) of the Great Wall.

"Stretching from Dandong, Liaoning Province, in the east to Jiayuguan Pass, Gansu Province, in the West, the Great Wall has been severely damaged by both environmental erosion and human vandalism," said Dong. "Destruction is even more severe in the desert regions of the West." Dong estimated that only one third of the wall is well-preserved, particularly around Beijing, while another third is seriously ruined, and the last third has long disappeared.

In preparation for the United Nations' first examination of the Wall since it was listed a World Heritage site in 1987, the society organized a special tour for experts and researchers of the Wall from August 3 to September 17. The group examined 101 Great Wall ruins and collected documents containing over a million words from seven provinces, cities and autonomous regions where it stood.

Their final report revealed that after over 500 years of natural erosion during the Ming Dynasty, the brick and stone walls risked imminent collapse, and the body will no doubt give way if the base erodes any further.

"Contrary to natural destruction, human vandalism is more targeted," said Luo Zhewen, vice president of the society. In the northwestern regions, with few bricks available to build their houses due to increasing desertification, farmers stole rammed earth or stones from the Wall, while others simply used it as a toilet.

Developing tourism also threatens the Wall, as local governments initiate projects to renovate the old Wall into new tourist sites, but at the same time compromising its historical and cultural value.

In order to preserve sections of the Wall in Beijing, the municipality issued the Great Wall Law four months ago, banning such acts of vandalism and endangerment as scratches, garbage disposal, and construction within 200 meters of the Wall. Dong said the local law will serve as a reference for the protection of all remaining sections of the Wall.

The society added that they are considering establishing a Great Wall Protection Foundation to include foreign individuals and institutes, as many of them have expressed their desire to donate aid to the wall. Such acts of charity should not exclude domestic individuals and organizations, who are especially encouraged to contribute to the preservation of their national cultural heritage.



December 18, 2002. A saleswoman displays a 12,500-gram gold bar in Beijing Arts & Crafts Mansion, as the gold bar of personal investment is put on sale. Xinhua Photo



MOFTEC vice minister Long Yongtu (left), and Raymond Krommenacker, WTO Regional Coordinator of the Asia and Pacific Region, at the opening ceremony of the Forum. Photos by Zhao Yong

China Wins Thumbs Up on WTO Entry Anniversary

By Xiao Rong

China has basically fulfilled its commitments during the first year of its WTO accession, according to the WTO annual progress report on the nation's trade policies.

The comment was announced Tuesday by Raymond Krommenacker, WTO Regional Coordinator of the Asia and Pacific Region, who was attending the two-day 2002 Beijing International Forum on China's WTO Entry.

US auto giant General Motors (GM) also comments that the Chinese government has demonstrated serious commitment to meeting its WTO obligations and believes China's auto market will continue to thrive.

Timothy P. Stratford, vice-chairman and general counselor of GM China, address the Forum, based on

a report from the American Chamber of Commerce on China's progress to date in implementing its WTO accession agreements.

The report was drafted from the results of a membership questionnaire as well as discussions within AmCham-China's various committees, industry forums, and board of governors.

"The survey demonstrates that the American business community in China remains optimistic about the favorable impact of the WTO process on the business environment, and is already benefiting from reduced tariffs and improved transparency," said Stratford.

Of the 208 survey respondents, 80 percent believe WTO accession will have a "positive" or "very positive" impact on their business.

The report outlines both progresses to date and areas for improvement in many sectors, Stratford added. "Aside from substantial progress, there remain many specific concerns, including some areas where China may not yet be in full compliance with WTO commitments."

In Stratford's view, sales of domestic cars reached a record high in 2002, showing that China's automobile industry has benefited from the country's WTO entry.

He also predicted that 2003 would see the country's import tariffs further decrease, and one or several foreign auto companies might be authorized to rent automobiles in China. China's auto-related laws and regulations would also become more internationalized and transparent.

WTO Senior Training Program to Be Held in Beijing

By Xiao Rong

A WTO Senior Trade Official Training Program is scheduled to open in Beijing University from April 28 to May 10, 2003.

Co-sponsored by the WTO, the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation (MOFTEC), Beijing University and Asia Development Bank, the program aims to provide practical training in technology for developing members of WTO in the Asia and Pacific region.

"On behalf of the Secretariat Office of WTO, I would like to express our thanks to the Chinese govern-

ment for its efforts in sponsoring this training program in Beijing," said Mr. Raymond Krommenacker, WTO Regional Coordinator in the Asia and Pacific Region, during his address at the 2002 Beijing International Forum on China's WTO Entry held on Tuesday and Wednesday in the capital.

The WTO is considering holding similar training programs in seven other developing members of WTO, with the program in Egypt already launched, according to Mr. Krommenacker.

Basic knowledge of WTO rules

and practical negotiation skills targeting the new round of Doha trade talks are the two main features of the program, said Shao Jingchun, director of the WTO Law Study Center of Beijing University.

"Our sponsorship of the program not only presents the image of China actively involved in WTO affairs, but also benefits the establishment of comprehensive WTO training network in China," said Shao.

A total of 29 vice-minister level officials will attend the 15-day program to acquire the latest WTO-related skills.

Chinese Students Compete for the "Real UK"

By Liu Jia

The British Council, sponsored by some of the most famous names in British sports, business, music, entertainment, academia, design and technology, are inviting students from Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen to learn more about the UK.

Organized by the council that acts as the cultural and educational sec-

tion of the British Embassy in China, the 'Real UK' campaign offers young people aged 15 to 17 years the chance to win a two-week study trip to the UK, where they will be introduced to a variety of inspiring personalities, visit leading companies, and enjoy some of the UK's top cultural attractions.

To enter the competition, candidates must send a three-minute

video presenting a personal profile, stating their dreams in life, and indicating their interest in and impressions of the UK. Winners from China will meet winners from 13 other countries during the trip to the UK, which takes place in March 2003.

More information about the campaign is available at www.educationuk.org.cn/realuk

Government Purchase in 2003: 150 Billion

By Ema Ma

The Government Purchase Bill will go into effect January 1st, 2003. As estimated by a Financial Department official, public purchases will increase by 50 percent to 150 billion yuan in 2003.

Since the beginning of the trial in 1996, the government purchase scale has more than doubled in the past three consecutive years: 13 billion yuan in 1999, 32.8 billion yuan in 2000 and 65.3 billion yuan in 2001.

As indicated on the official website (www.ccgp.gov.cn), the purchase catalogue includes three main categories: commodities, services and constructions. In 2001, the proportion of purchases in the above-mentioned items was respectively 63 percent, 29 percent and 8 percent. Purchase of commodities consisted primarily of business cars, PCs and other office equipment, while services were mainly vehicle insurance and fuel. Purchase of constructions accounts for only a small portion, as it represents one of the costliest public expenditures. As indicated by the official, the government plans to develop the purchase of services and constructions in the future.

Professor Yu An from the law school of Tsinghua University, points out that the Government Purchase Agreement included in the WTO treaty has not been compulsory until now. Therefore, the public bidding market will still be limited to local companies in the near future, in compliance with the Bill. In 2001, national brand products accounted for 90 percent of all purchases.

Generally, public purchases constitute 10 percent to 15 percent of the GNP. Thus calculated, the purchase scale in 2001 is expected to exceed one thousand billion yuan (the actual figure is a mere 65.3 billion yuan), providing a big market and buffer zone for local companies to develop gradually as they meet the upcoming challenge of competition from abroad.

A Hundred More Duty-Free Products

By Hou Mingxin

According to Shenzhen based WTO Reference Center, China will eliminate tariffs on about a hundred products beginning January 1, 2003.

"The proposed duty-free products include silver and gold in semi-manufactured form, sawing machines for semiconductor or crystal, word-processing machines, fax machines, grinding/polishing machines for glass, ethernet switches, radio telephone handsets etc.," said a spokesman for the center.

Import duties of products in 2002 ranged from 1.5 percent to 7 percent. In 2003, the elimination of tariffs may lower the prices of these products on the Chinese market, says the center.

"In general, China has taken several positive steps to implement many of its WTO commitments during the past year," said the spokesman. As examples, he credited China with reducing tariffs, "notably for information technology products, chemicals, automobiles and auto parts, and many agricultural goods." He also claims China has also removed many non-tariff barriers affecting industries such as chemicals and scientific equipment.

More information is available at: www.wtosz.org.

Foreigners Invited to Open Transport

By Ema Ma

"Effective December 1st, 2002, foreign investors may hold up to 75% of transportation company shares," announced the PRC's Ministry of Communications last week.

Mr. Xu Baoli, an expert from the Ministry of Communications, indicated that this measure fulfills China's commitment as a new member of the WTO. In accordance with the schedule set by the WTO, since China's date of membership December 11th, 2001, foreign investors should be permitted to control joint ventures in transportation by end 2002, and to wholly own shares in local transportation companies three to four years later.

The Ministry of Communications also announced that for such government-encouraged areas as container transportation, distribution, auto leasing and joint ventures with freight companies from western China, the 75% limit could be even higher. Mr. Xu mentioned that this is also a transition measure in preparation for the wholly open market three years later.

"No company has applied for further capital investment until now," added Mr. Xu.

It's All in the Address

By Su Wei

It seems ".com.cn" could soon be a thing of the past. When China's Internet authorities gave their approval for companies to switch from .com.cn to simply .cn addresses this week, there was an explosion of applications.

Within six hours of China's domain name registration companies accepting applications on December 16, more than 5,000 foreign companies had applied. By December 18, the number of domestic and foreign applicants had risen to 60,000.

The move was approved by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC). According to CNNIC's half-yearly survey released in August this year, the number of .com.cn registered domain names in China was only 140,000, compared with

over 300 million .com registered domain names.

"Compared with .com, an international symbol, .cn is a symbol unique to China. Any foreign company can find information focusing on the Chinese market and Chinese enterprises through websites registered with .cn domain names," said Liu Zhijing, deputy director of CNNIC.

In his opinion, the value of domain names with .cn is priceless, especially for domestic companies. "A domain name with .cn is like a brand name, which will expand its recognition and influence around the world."

"Switching to .cn will also help cut costs for domestic companies in domain name disputes as we will be able to arbitrate on the matter in China, without having to refer to some overseas body," Liu pointed out.

CNNIC attributed the flood of applications to its recent move to free up the domestic domain name registration industry. CNNIC recently stepped back from registering domain names itself, taking a new role of supervising and regulating the industry.

Liu says it has become a trend to separate management of domain name registration from the actual registration. "What we are more concerned with is how to win in the competition in registering domain names," he said. "By delegating power, registration will be more commercialized, which is certain to make registration more convenient and flexible."

CNNIC said there are three areas they will focus on in regulating domain name registration — maintaining a

data base for registration, ensuring reliable services are provided by each registrar such as the stability of their mail box and website visiting, and setting out policies for any disputes.

Liu said that although the first approved domestic registrars are all former CNNIC agents, the center will not only approve its own agents. "As long as the registrar applicants are well organized, are capable of providing long-term stable services and have enough capital, we will give them approval," he said.

In his opinion, the new move will raise the requirements for registrars to offer higher quality service. "They all offer a similar price for domain name registration of around 200 yuan, so people will only choose those capable of providing the best services."

Beijing Brand Bonanza



Photo by Shan Jinliang

By Shan Jinliang

Hundreds of people queued up this Wednesday for the opening of the new Yansha Youyi Shopping City outlets store. It's the first American-style discount store for famous brands in China.

It's the first separate store Yansha Youyi City has opened since its

debut ten years ago. Located at the Northwest corner of Gongda Bridge on the Fourth Ring Road, the new store sells world-famous brand products with discounts of 40 to 90 percent. The store claims to sell over 200 brands, including Kenzo, Polo, Ports, DKNY, D&G and Prada. As well as clothes, the store also sells cultural

and sports products, suitcases, shoes and furnishings.

The store can charge such low prices for several reasons, one of which is its relatively distant location, far from downtown. It also uses basic sales methods, and sells out of date brand products bought from franchised stores and off-sea-

son products. The clothes manufacturers also sell clothes to the outlets made with used cloth and styles that are just out of date, thus making big savings in costs, research and marketing.

Yansha may be leading the way, but other stores are bound to follow suit in China's brand bonanza.

Going Auto-crazy

By Ema Ma

Hyundai is clearly doing something right. Last weekend, 1,500 orders were placed for its Sonata, the new sedan it released last month. That's 75 percent of the model's current year sales objective. It shows how hot Beijing's auto market has become.

Total auto sales this year reached 239 thousand units by the end of November, an increase of 14.5 percent over last year. According to data from Beijing Statistics Bureau, private owners have become the major buying segment in the auto market.

Considering some customers are still waiting for further drops in the tariff on imported cars, the State Information Center estimated that the demand in China in 2003 will be for 3.8 million cars.



Photo by Lily

Foreign Fruits No Longer Forbidden

By Tony Shaw

The prospects in China seem bright for foreign fruit companies. US California Table Grape Commission is preparing for a promotion in Beijing later this month and Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC) released new goods on December 3. In contrast, sales people at Beijing Sidaokou Fruit Wholesale Market say things are looking decidedly gloomy for domestic fruit producers.

Statistics from the market, the largest in the city, revealed that since a number of foreign fruit companies cut their prices by 30 to 50 percent just over a month ago, their sales volume has rocketed by around 20 percent. The foreign producers, including Sunkist Fresh Citrus Growers, California Table Grape Commission and FDOC, were making good on a promise to cut prices they made shortly after China was granted WTO membership last year.

The market share for foreign fruit has reached 10 percent and is rising fast, even though it only entered the market a few years ago. These days, the foreign producers are aiming for the main middle class market, rather than the smaller, top end market.

As a world leading fruit pro-

ducing country, China has found its share of its own fruit market being eroded in the south and now the north is feeling the pressure too. Chinese Sesame Bananas have suffered heavily from competition from overseas bananas. Beijing imported nine million kilograms of foreign bananas last year, equivalent to the total sales volume of Sesame Bananas from Guangdong Province for the last few years.

At the same time, inexpensive fruit from Thailand and Burma is snatching the market for cheaper fruit. Vietnam, the largest fruit exporting country to China, exported 134,000 kilograms of fruit from this January to June, a 293.1 percent rise from the same period last year.

Industry experts concluded that the tariff cut after China's WTO entry is a leading cause for the crisis facing Chinese fruit producers. Well packaged and less expensive foreign fruit is simply more popular. Another effect of the WTO deal is that foreign fruit can now be shipped to Tianjin rather than just to Hong Kong, allowing further cost savings for foreign producers.

The falling fruit prices are boosting demand among middle class urban consumers. Louis Ng, China's representative of FDOC, said the growing health

consciousness among Chinese consumers led to the rise in sales of grapefruit. The widespread use of pesticide on Chinese fruit makes the domestic variety less appealing to more affluent customers.

Industry experts say the lack of economies of scale and extensive sales service networks are the core problems for China's fruit industry. While US fruits are available all year round thanks to better storage, Chinese fruits can be bought only during a few months in a year. What's more, since there are only around ten local fruit associations in China, insufficient market information can be collected.

"Another threat to the Chinese fruit industry is the localization of foreign fruits," said an expert who declined to be named at the China Economic Forestry Information Net. Foreign fruit companies are now planting their fruit in China with advanced technologies. Along with the benefits from richer marketing experience, they will pose an increasing threat to Chinese fruit companies. Japanese apple producers have been enjoying considerable market success for the last few years in Shandong Province, the home of the Chinese apple.

Cigna Forms Life Insurance Joint Venture

By Hou Mingxin

The third largest US health insurer, Cigna, announced on December 13 that it had signed an agreement with SDZ, an affiliate of China Merchants Group (CMC), one of China's largest commercial organizations, to form a joint venture, Cigna & CMC Life Insurance Company Limited.

Cigna received approval in September from the China Insurance Regulatory Commission to set up in the southern city of Shenzhen. The new joint venture will start its business in 2003.

According to a spokeswoman at Cigna's Beijing office, the venture's registered capital will be 200 million yuan and each partner will hold a 50 percent stake.

"We offer simple, affordable and easy-to-understand coverage, such as life and accident insurance, and supplemental health policies that provide financial protection against catastrophic illness or provide cash payments for hospital stays," said the spokeswoman. "Supplemental health insurance, which fills specific gaps in government-sponsored coverage, is particularly popular, serving as comfort for those worried about suddenly being saddled with costly medical bills."

Cigna also announced that the joint venture will have a marketing and distribution alliance with China Merchants Bank.

With businesses in Asia Pacific, Latin America and Europe, the Philadelphia-based insurer provides health care, medical care management services and defined contribution pension products to the workplace and consumer markets, as well as life, accident and health insurance to individuals. Cigna is also a leading supplier of specialized health care and insurance benefits to expatriate employees of multinational companies on international assignments.

Yahoo China Clicks onto 3721

By Shan Jinliang

The leading Chinese keyword service provider 3721.com announced last week it had signed a deal to let Yahoo China (www.yahoo.com.cn) use its Internet keyword service technology.

3721 said it was another significant deal following the agreement with Microsoft to use its keyword service last month.

Chinese keyword service enables Internet users in China to navigate the web by writing keywords for their searches in the address bar. With the keyword service technology of 3721.com, Yahoo China visitors can find more related Chinese websites.

Since 3721 initiated the Chinese keyword service in 1998, it has been used by 99 percent of Chinese web users, and over 250,000 companies have registered their keywords into the 3721.com database for self-promotion. Around 300 regional information websites in the country and leading portals as Sina.com, Sohu.com, Netease.com, China.com, Tom.com and 21cn.com have used its Chinese keyword service.

CEO Clubs Makes China Debut

By Shan Jinliang

US-based CEO Clubs opened its first overseas branch in Beijing on Wednesday. The 25-year-old company also hosted a CEO International Forum, inviting 24 CEOs from the US as well as 180 from China.

CEO Clubs was established in Boston, US in 1977. It's the oldest and largest not-for-profit association for CEOs and entrepreneurs. The club aims to provide a nurturing environment for CEOs, dedicated to improving the quality and profitability of their enterprises through shared experience and personal growth.

According to Joseph R. Mancuso, founder and CEO of CEO Clubs, the opening of CEO Clubs China and the launch of the forum was aimed to deepen understanding of the Chinese market and hopefully to establish a collaboration with small and medium-sized enterprises.

Headquartered in New York, US, CEO Clubs has over 7,000 members in its 12 regional branches. Membership is only granted to CEOs of companies with an annual sales volume of more than US\$20 million. The current life-long members list includes Ted Turner (founder of CNN), Fred Smith (CEO of Chrysler), Richard DeVos (CEO of Amway) and Steve Forbes (CEO of Forbes magazine).

In Wednesday's forum, four US CEOs, including Joseph R. Mancuso, and three Chinese CEOs exchanged ideas on entrepreneurship, CEOs' obligations, definition of success and shared market opportunities. In an effort to build a sound relationship with Chinese counterparts, CEO Clubs will introduce its commercial resources and management materials to China, and CEO International Forums will continue to be held both in the US and in China. CEO Clubs China is planning to send a delegation of Chinese CEOs to the US next February.

Led by Joseph R. Mancuso, the CEO Clubs delegation visited Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing from December 14 to 19, hosting talks on IT, auto, construction, freight, education and management consultation.



Joseph R. Mancuso, president of CEO Clubs



Simon Guo, president of CEO Clubs China

Photos by Shan Jinliang

Venezuela Opposition Back Strike

CARACAS, Venezuela, Dec 17 (Reuters) - Thousands of protesters marched in Caracas on Tuesday to demand the resignation of President Hugo Chavez on the 16th day of a strike that has crippled Venezuela's vital oil industry.

Waving banners, banging pots and chanting slogans, angry marchers streamed along one of Caracas' main highways as armored vehicles and National Guard troops were deployed near the presidential palace to prevent anti-government forces from approaching it.

The march, which ended close to the National Pantheon where the remains of 19th century independence hero Simon Bolivar are entombed, was generally peaceful, although groups of hostile Chavez supporters had gathered around the monument.

(Ibon Villelabeitia)

Venezuela Strike Strangling Oil Industry

CARACAS, Venezuela, Dec 18 (AP) - Opposition demonstrators blocked major highways and roads Wednesday, paralyzing parts of the capital in a strike against President Hugo Chavez's rule that has strangled Venezuela's critical oil industry.

The strike - in its 17th day - has reduced oil output from nearly 3 million barrels per day to 400,000, sending the world

price of crude oil above \$30 a barrel and depriving the country of \$50 million a day in export income. Exports to the United States also have been cut. (Andrew Selsky)

Analysts' Take:

Feng Zhiqi, senior correspondent stationed in Washington, People's Daily

Hugo Chavez is a president from the grassroots. He has the determination to carry out a thorough reform of the country's social structure that used to be dominated by middle and upper classes. His reforms affected conservative forces in the country.

Chavez had not realized that before reform, he should put his country's economic position in a better situation, increase living standards and incomes. The increase in unemployment and inflation deteriorated the grassroots supporters' already low quality of life.

Chavez has rolled out his reform initiatives too rapidly, leading to opposition parties, religious groups and workers' unions joining hands. He needs to carry out his reforms step by step, in a acceptable way.

Venezuela's military, heavily influenced by western concepts and values, does not accept Chavez's version of Simon Bolivar's revolutionary concept.

Two factors magnified the



Traders work in the oil trading pit at the New York Mercantile Exchange on December 17, 2002. World oil prices have risen 20 percent in a month because of Venezuela's stoppage and fears of war in Iraq. Reuters Photo

impact of Venezuela's turmoil.

The country's opposition forces control 90 percent of the country's media industry, which played an important role in advocating the opposition forces and calling on the grassroots to follow them in their movements

against Hugo Chavez.

Oil production and export is the country's most important and largest industry. Any stoppage or delay of its oil exports will greatly impact the world's market. That's why oil prices have rocketed to a record price

over \$30 per barrel this week, although we can't deny that this high price is led also by other factors, such as the high tension in the Middle East and Iraq in particular.

Qi Fengtian, fellow researcher, Division of Country Studies, Institute of Latin American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Venezuelan people are fed up with the two opposition parties that dominated the country's political stage in the past decades, fed up with their corruption and incapability to maintain a steady economic growth. Hugo Chavez emerged in the midst of such political circumstances in 1996. He stands for the grassroots' victory by general voting. He has the support of the popular vote.

It seems Chavez can keep his presidency, at least for the current term.

First, the opposition parties only have a loose coalition. Even if they depose Chavez, they will have great trouble in deciding who will take power.

The opposition is proposing a referendum to depose Chavez. But the constitution states that only after the president finishes half of his term can a referendum be carried out. Even though, Chavez can quite possibly win the referendum, with his 57 percent of presidential election voting shares.



Tallest Skyscrapers Proposed at WTC

Nine competing designs for the World Trade Center site were unveiled in New York, December 18, with several of them boldly proposing that the city answer the September 11 terrorist attack by erecting the tallest skyscrapers on Earth.

Four of the plans for ground zero call for topping Malaysia's 1,483-foot (445-meter) Petronas Twin Towers. One envisions a 2,100-foot (630-meter) skyscraper, while another proposes a 1,776-foot (533-meter) tower topped with a spire.

The World Trade Center's twin towers measured 1,350 feet (405 meters).

However, victims' relatives said it was hard to imagine anyone wanting to work in skyscrapers there, or even look up at them.

The plans for rebuilding the site and surrounding neighborhood came from seven teams of architects from Berlin, London, Amsterdam, Tokyo, New York and Los Angeles, and were selected from 407 submissions.

A first set of plans released in July was derided as boring and overstuffed with office space.

Foster and Partners Architects submitted this proposed design. The nine different visions for the site are similar in that they all have a mass transit hub, retail and commercial space, museums and cultural institutions, a broad tree lined boulevard, and gardens and memorials to the 2,800 victims of the attacks that toppled the twin towers. (Karen Matthews) Reuters Photo



Douglas Daft, chairman and chief executive of Coca-Cola said December 13, it will no longer offer quarterly and annual earnings forecasts because such "guidance" takes attention away from the company's long-term initiatives. AP Photo

Coca-Cola: No More Earnings Guidance

ATLANTA, USA, Dec 13 (Dow Jones)- Coca-Cola Co. reiterated its 2002 earnings guidance, but said Friday that it won't provide quarterly or annual earnings guidance in the future.

"We believe that establishing short-term guidance prevents a more meaningful focus on the strategic initiatives that a company is taking to build its business and succeed over the long-run," Douglas N. Daft, Coke's chairman and chief executive, said in a prepared statement.

Coke noted that it won't update its 2003 guidance as

the year progresses. Instead, the company said it would provide perspective on its "value drivers, its strategic initiatives and those factors critical to understanding its business and operating environment." (Yolanda E. McBride and Thomas Gryta)

Media Reports:

Coca-Cola is to keep earnings guidance to itself!

Just when most companies are going out of their way to give investors more information, Coca-Cola is going the other way.

Coke's announcement is a

blow to anyone who relied on the company's estimates to gauge its future health. Some analysts say Coke's shareholders could get whipsawed because there's a greater chance of a big surprise when the company reports results.

Coke's move is an apparent victory for famed investor Warren Buffett, who sits on Coke's board of directors. Buffett has long criticized Wall Street's infatuation with short-term earnings forecasts. Now, all three companies at which Buffett is a board member - Gillette, Washington Post Co. and Coke - don't give earnings estimates.

Still, Coke's decision is rare. Roughly 95% of companies give investors earnings guidance, says Marc Gerstein, director of investment research at Multex.

Some applaud Coke's move because it could stop "the earnings game" if others follow. Much of the earnings fraud during the '90s was a result of managing earnings estimates, they believe.

The danger, though, is that companies will follow Coke's action simply so they can give less information to investors, says Chuck Hill, research chief at Thomson First Call. —Matt Krantz, USA Today

Tobacco Award Slashed

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 18 (Reuters) - A California judge on Wednesday slashed a record \$28 billion jury award against cigarette maker Philip Morris to a comparatively paltry \$28 million, calling the punitive damages "legally excessive."

Philip Morris, the World's No. 1 tobacco company, said it still planned to appeal the verdict and expects the process to take several years.

A jury ordered the company in October to pay \$28 billion in punitive damages to 64-year-old Betty Bullock, a woman suffering from terminal lung cancer who blamed the company for failing to warn her of the risks of smoking. (Deena Beasley)

United Cuts Fares

CHICAGO, Dec. 18 (AP) - United Airlines, moving to retain passengers while it restructures following its bankruptcy, launched a sale Wednesday on tickets bought by the end of the year.

The fare sale, which applies to most of United's 1,800 daily flights, was accompanied by advertisements in major markets and national newspapers saying: "Thanks for all your support. Just returning the favor with some low fares."

The sale fares are for domestic travel from Jan. 1 through April 4 and overseas from Jan. 13 until March.

Credit Suisse First Boston Fined

LONDON, Dec. 19 (Reuters) - Britain's financial watchdog slapped a \$6.40 million fine, it's highest ever, on investment bank Credit Suisse First Boston on Thursday for trying to mislead Japanese regulatory and tax authorities.

The Financial Services Authority said that, between 1995 and 1998, Credit Suisse First Boston International had attempted to mislead the Japanese authorities by concealing and removing evidence about the extent and type of its Japanese businesses.

Oracle Results Beat Company Forecast

PALO ALTO, Calif., Dec. 18 (Reuters) - Database giant Oracle Corp. on Wednesday posted quarterly earnings and revenues that beat its own cautious forecasts, saying it believes the worst is over.

Total revenue slipped to \$2.31 billion from \$2.38 billion a year earlier, but higher than the company's previous guidance as international business, excluding Japan, improved.

"We think the quarter we're in now will be better. We'll show some top-line growth this quarter," Oracle CEO Larry Ellison told Reuters Television.

(Lisa Baertlein)

U.S. Trade Deficit Falls

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19 (AP) - The U.S. trade deficit fell to \$35.1 billion in October, the best showing since March, but the improvement reflected disruptions caused by the West Coast dock dispute rather than any fundamental improvement in the country's trade performance.

The Commerce Department reported Wednesday that the October trade deficit fell by 5.5 percent from the September deficit of \$37.1 billion, which had been the second highest ever after a record \$38.1 billion deficit in August. (Martin Crutsinger)

McDonald's First Loss in 47 Years

CHICAGO, Dec. 18 (AP) - McDonald's Corp.'s 47-year streak of posting quarterly gains may be at an end, a victim of a protracted sales slump that has already forced the world's largest restaurant chain to change CEOs.

McDonald's said Tuesday it expects to incur after-tax charges of at least \$390 million in the fourth quarter to pay for the restructuring moves, including closing under-performing restaurants and pulling out of several countries. That will result in a net loss of 5 cents to 6 cents per share.

A price war with rival Burger King hasn't paid off the way the company hoped in a U.S. restaurant market, mad-cow disease scares overseas, marketing misfires and mounting service complaints. (Dave Carpenter)



The golden arches of a McDonald's drive-through sign are watched over by Cha Cha, the Rain Forest Cafe's green tree frog, at one of the fast food giant's locations Tuesday, December 17, in downtown Chicago. AP Photo

One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Kill Fish

By Su Wei

Originally from the Amazon River, *serrasalmus nattereri*, commonly known as red piranhas, were introduced to Beijing over ten years ago, but now face a tragic death in the Chinese capital.

On December 18, the Beijing Fishery Supervision and Administration Bureau ordered the destruction of these carnivorous fish by twelve aquariums and pet fish markets before Christmas.

"We will examine all aquariums and markets one by one. Anyone found still raising the vicious species will be fined 50,000 yuan and the fish will be confiscated," says Wang, a staff member of the bureau who refused to give her full name.

It is the first time the local government has taken such vehement action to eliminate the fish, since the Chinese media reported the issue three months ago in the south of the country, and two weeks ago in Beijing.

This initiative was apparently triggered by Wang Hongyuan, researcher of fish studies at the Beijing Nature Museum, who sounded the alarm against the "approximately 500 red piranhas, each armed with triangular, inter-



Serrasalmus nattereri

locking, razor-sharp teeth, who risk decimating local species as they multiply and prey on anything that moves, once they outgrow their aquariums and invade the waterways."

She adds that the tropical fish may well adjust to the city's water temperature after just a few generations. "Besides, there are also some pretty comfortable springs in Beijing."

She concludes that *serrasalmus nattereri* is just one case among many of organic invasion in China, endangering the local ecosystem and certain to culminate in environmental disaster.

Wang Nan, who has been raising red pi-

ranhas for the past two years, admits that it was pure curiosity that drove his obsession. "I was told they could devour bigger fish within minutes." He regrets that he will have to find "some way to dispose of" his precious pets.

Vendors at the Guanyuan Pet Fish Market confided that the fish were usually imported from Guangzhou after "probably having been smuggled from overseas."

"Today most of the buyers are middle school students," says Li, a vendor who refused to give his full name. He claims what attracts them is "the cruel nature of the piranhas and the excitement of witnessing them viciously attack other fish, leaving nothing but a pile of bones."

The vendors say the new ban will probably not affect them much, since they eventually intended to abandon the trade anyway.

Beijing Aquarium, nurturing the largest number of killer fish at some 300 piranhas strong, say that they will comply with the regulation, although their intention was always to introduce the species to young people for the purpose of education. "All of our fish have been sterilized anyway," says a spokeswoman for the aquarium, also unwilling to disclose her name.



Customers must carry their clothes as they shop for books.

Photo by Lily

Coating Beijing with Customer Service

By Su Wei

Sweat trickles down the forehead of a customer wearing a heavy winter coat inside Beijing Bookstore in Xidan at an ambient temperature of 26 degrees centigrade. Others, with nowhere to leave their coats, hug them to their chests, underneath a heaping pile of books.

Aware that this experience is not just limited to shoppers, *Beijing Youth Daily* investigated a full-page story, only to discover that just about the city's entire service industry fails to provide the convenient coat-checking service.

Restaurant diners have become accustomed to hanging their coats on the back of their chairs, even in the finer dining halls of fancy establishments such as the renowned Quanjude Peking Duck Restaurant and Moscow Restaurant.

A waitress of Shun Feng, an expensive Guangdong Restaurant, points out that covers are provided to protect clothes draped over chairs. "Our reserved room has its own clothes rack," says another waitress interviewed by *Beijing Youth Daily*.

At the cinema or in a concert hall, people may put their thick outerwear on a nearby seat, but if no free seats are available, they are bound to keep them on their laps for the duration of the performance, sometimes up to two hours or more.

Even Beijing's first five star cinema, the Ultimate Movie Experience International Cinplex (UMEIC), with its rep-

utation for customer service, only offers a coat check in its luxurious lobby.

While most people have the impression that coats compete with human beings to occupy seats provided for customers to rest in stores, this is rarely the case in Chaoyang district's Landao shopping center.

Jia Shiqiang, director of the customer service department, says they provide a three-tier clothes rack on the second floor near the stairway entrance.

"The cost of a customer coat-check is at least 200,000 yuan per year, compared with annual sales of more than 240,000 yuan if a counter were there," he says. "But once customers take off their coats and make themselves comfortable, the more time they will spend shopping in Landao, and the more items they will purchase. We are making a long-term profit."

Li Fei, professor of the College of Economics and Management of Tsinghua University, calls on the service industry to wake up and serve the people. He stresses that concern only for economic benefit will only result in economic loss, because "people prefer the places with the best customer service."

Sun Ping, director of the Public Information department of Capital Spiritual Civilization Office, says that offering a cloakroom not only reveals Beijing's hospitality as a metropolitan city but also represents its "degree of civility and propriety."



Photo by Jackey

"No War" Hung on Message Tree

Thousands of messages have been hung on a message tree standing about seven meters tall on the southeast corner of Zhongyou Department Store, in Xidan Plaza. While most messages wish their families and friends good tidings, one yellow slip of paper reads: "World Peace! No war!"

Photo by Jackey

Laundry Acrobatics

By Lily Li

Qian Yu, a sophomore student at Beijing Technology Research College, fell from the 5th floor as she tried to hang her clothes from the window-sill, resulting in several fractures in her body.

She now is lying in a small bed of Hospital 261 in Changping District, pale faced, incapable of the slightest move, and in bad shape.

Qian Yu says it was about 6pm, December 9, when she climbed out on the window-sill to hang her clothes. With one leg inside and the other outside the window, she was reaching for a slim iron chain under the sill when suddenly, the wind caught the heavy clothes in her arm and threw her off balance.

"I couldn't reach the window frame and just fell," Qian Yu says, remembering her panic when she realized the situation was dire.

As soon as they heard the thump of her fall, teachers and security guards came and sent her to nearby Hospital 261. Luckily for her, she fell feet first, so the alleviated impact on her vital organs saved her life, and she suffered only several fractures in

her legs and spine.

Li Jingbiao, the school dean, observes that students preferred to hang their clothes outside their dorm windows to avoid the occasional loss of their clothes at the laundromat. The school has since distributed iron hooks and chains to each dormitory.

However, one of the school's rules prohibits climbing out the window. "Obviously, Qian Yu was infringing school regulations," says Dean Li.

But students on campus say they have no other choice. "There is no other place to dry our clothes," says Wei Ling, "We've always dried our clothes this way. It's a real stunt show." She claims the iron hooks provided by the school "can't be used" because of their short heads. In winter, wet clothes are too heavy for the small hooks, and "I was also once within an inch of falling," she says.

Qian Yu's parents have arrived in Beijing and spoken with the school. Since her fall, the school has installed some clotheslines in the corridors of the dormitory buildings, but still many students insist on performing their own window-sill stunts.



Each member of the audiences is inspected for any possible instruments of audio-visual piracy.

Photo by Cui Jun

Anti-pirate Heroes

By Chen Ying

Defending the honor of *Hero* the movie is a heroic act in itself.

So far, the film's producers have won the battle against its pirate parasites, as no unlicensed VCDs or DVDs were seen on the black market before the movie's Beijing premiere in the Great Hall of the People on December 14.

Thousands of fans are expected to see celebrated director Zhang Yimou's latest feature, but there is a catch — they will have to wait until December 20, when the film officially opens for public screening.

Of course, the public includes the pirates. Pirated discs have always been the stigma of computer software and movie industries in China, no matter how many government rules and regulations say otherwise, and CD vendors thrive in the streets of the capital.

This time however, the heroic producers have decided to strike back. For the advance screening of *Hero* at the Great Hall of the People, the audience was subject to strict inspection. Not unlike convicts entering prison, each spectator was given a big plastic bag in which all their belongings were confiscated before they were allowed to enter the auditorium.

Spectacle fans were asked by guards to remove their glasses before entering the hall, but they were finally allowed to watch the film in four-eyed focus under the scrutinizing eye of hired inspectors. Meanwhile, around thirty guards patrolled the walkways, equipped with special detecting instruments, throughout the entire screening.

So far, so good. Although some retailers claimed they possessed a copy of the film, only the movie's basic content has been authorized for use in publicity. What will happen after December 20th however, nobody knows.

"The earliest that people can buy the pirate VCD is December 23," said a retailer under the overpass near Changhong Bridge on the east Third Ring Road.

So the battle continues. "We'll spend 2 million yuan to bust these pirates. We'll give 5,000 yuan to every informer. The Ministry of Culture has set up a special *Hero* commission to clamp down on pirate movie wholesales nationwide," said a spokesman from Guangzhou Weijia Company, one of only three privileged companies who won the bid to publish *Hero* on both VCD and DVD beginning December 17, for the honest price of 17.8 million yuan.

Mynah Acquitted

By Lily Li

The audience exploded in passionate applause as Dongcheng District People's Court announced the victory of the accused mynah bird Tuesday morning.

The "abusive" mynah had triggered court action on November 5th, when plaintiff Li Deben first complained of the verbal abuse the bird had been hurling at him daily for the past several months, demanding public apology from the defendant, 1,000 yuan for damaging his reputation, and another 1,000 yuan in compensation.

Li sent a tape of the bird's hoarse caws to the court, but he could provide no witness. His 11-part tape, recorded behind the door of his house, contained sounds of the mynah's supposedly abusive refrains such as "Li is bad! Li is bad!"

Feng Yongsheng, the mynah's

owner, brought three neighbors to court as witnesses, who all testified that the bird only said polite expressions such as "Hello, Sir" and "Hello, Madam," with never a rude word in its vocabulary.

The mynah failed to appear in court.

The court then turned down Li's appeal, explaining that although his tapes contained bird tweets, there was no evidence to confirm that it was indeed the voice of Feng's bird featured on the tapes. "The tapes do not constitute valid evidence for conviction," ruled the court.

Feng welcomes this judgment, saying it is "fair and reasonable." However, Li and his family have expressed their dissatisfaction, vowing to appeal to a higher court.

The mynah was unavailable for comment.



Photo by Jackey

Colombian Reflections in a Golden Eye

Reproductions of Colombian gold works of the Cano Gallery in Bogotá in the shape of masks, rafts and animals are the highlight of the first Colombian Culture Week from December 16-20 at the Jintai Art Museum.

Around 300 works, including oil paintings, clay sculptures and architectural designs, are presented in the exhibition. Colombian films, music and other live performances will also be offered in a cultural effort to enhance communication between Colombia and China.

(By Su Wei)

Does Sex Sell?

A sight for sore eyes, or merely an eyesore

By Chen Ying

A new advertisement was hung on a billboard along Huaqiang Street in Shenzhen at the beginning of last month.

The billboard background is red, with the white silhouette of a young woman on the left of the board. A line of Chinese characters printed at bottom — 等着你来包, deng zhe ni lai bao — says waiting for hire.

The character “bao” stands out in bright yellow. In Chinese, the verb “bao”, a very popular word in Southern China, means a man who supports a woman because of their sexual relationship. Many people attach negative connotations to the word, especially in Shenzhen, where it is very common for Hong Kong business men to keep a cross-border mistress.

Only at the top-right corner of the board, there is a line of tiny characters — which makes it clear that it is actually an advertisement to attract potential clients to rent the billboard space for themselves.

Some passers-by called *Nanfang Daily*, a local newspaper, complaining the advertisement was low-grade and it should not be hung in public. But Miss Wei, manager of the company that developed the advertisement, thought their scheme was successful. “A good advertisement needs a selling point to attract peoples’ attention,” she said.

According to the report in *Nanfang Daily*, November 19, a spokesman for the local Administration Office for Industry and Commerce also agreed it was just the advertisement company trying to be original and creative. “It doesn’t break the advertising law since no violence or pornography appear in the advertisement,” he said, “It’s unnecessary to think it’s any more than that.”

But local people seemed to disagree with their conclusion. The company received more than a hundred phone calls

querying the content of the advertisement. The corresponding administration also felt pressure from the public. Soon the advertisement was replaced, not because it broke any regulation or law but because it did not get permission from the local Administration Office for Industry and Commerce.

Beijingers can also find some similar creative advertising along the streets. The sentence — 有本事就上, you ben shi jiu shang (come along if you’re powerful) — was printed on a billboard near Sitong Bridge along the northwest part of the Third Ring Road recently. It actually was an advertisement for an on-line employment agency.

Also easy to find the side of some Beijing buses is an advertisement with the quote — 好颜色之涂料, hao yan se zhi tu liao (the good color paint). The second and sixth characters are smaller than the others. But “好色之涂” is a partial tone with a Chinese idiom “好色之徒” which is used to describe a lecher.

It seems that it is now popular for advertising companies to promote their clients’ products using sex as the selling point. But are Chinese people prepared to accept such ideas? Opinions follow:

Lian Hongyang, journalist, Nanfang Daily

It is really excessive to say the advertisement is violent and pornographic. But does it break advertising law? There is a code in the law that states advertisements shouldn’t promote unsound social concepts. So what is the concept that “deng zhe ni lai bao” wants to transmit? Even though such an advertisement is not illegal, it’s hard to accept it in accordance with Chinese moral standards.

Originality is the cradle of advertising. An advertisement is not a good one if it lacks creativity. But there should be a bottom line. Otherwise, so-called creativity will lead to the opposite it was intended.

Duan Peng, advertisement expert, Beijing Broadcasting Institute

Although advertising products themselves do not have a duty to be responsible for morals, they shouldn’t break social common sense about moral culture. In western countries, one in ten advertisement schemes may be involved with ideas about sex.

But as Chinese, we have our own national characteristics. In such a cultural environment, advertising creativity shouldn’t just focus on how to make it sensational but should also think about how to match people’s values to beauty and reputation.

Now, there seems to be a wave of advertisements with sexual implications. The major reason may lie in that some advertisement designers are unstable. They would rather just copy or imitate the ideas of foreign advertising than create a scheme that the Chinese can easily accept.

yaoyao.5411, Internet surfer

Society is realistic. If the designer can’t think out a distinctive idea, he or she may lose the job. So some advertising ideas may involve sex or sexuality, especially since people’s consciousness is more open than in the past and it’s easy to attract people’s attention.

Advertising, as any business, is subject to the rules of the market. The merchants would change the advertisement if it didn’t reach the anticipated targets. It’s ridiculous to criticize those ideas if they don’t break any laws.

Blane Kieng, Managing Director, Spencer Grey Advertisement Company

In advertising, there is really no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ just ‘good’ or ‘bad’. If an advertisement helps to get the message across or helps to sell the product, then it’s good. If it doesn’t then it’s bad.



Waiting in vain for hire in Shenzhen

Photo by Xu Wenge

In western societies, the use of sex in advertising is almost as old as the practice of advertising itself. For many advertisers, the issue is really not about whether or not to use sex, but to what extent in order to be effective. Since consumers have become so used to the idea of sex in advertising many advertisements nowadays have to be pretty extreme for anyone to even take notice.

It would seem from the examples

mentioned that although tame by western standards, Chinese advertisements are quickly catching up.

There really is nothing wrong with the practice as long as it is useful and serves the purpose. Whether sex should be used in any particular advertisement is a decision left up to the individual advertisers with consideration to the particular audience that they are trying to reach.

Reporters Refuse to Court Summons

War reporter will not have to testify, court rules

By Lily Li

Lawyers, doctors and priests may refuse a court subpoena to testify at trials, and now war reporters are also covered, according to a recent UN Court ruling.

A former *Washington Post* reporter Jonathan Randal won an appeal, December 11, at the UN war crimes tribunal and will not have to testify in court after he convinced appeals court judges it could jeopardize journalists’ lives and press freedom.

Randal had resisted a subpoena to appear against Radovan Brdjanin, a Bosnian Serb leader he interviewed in 1993 who is on trial for the persecution and expulsion of more than 100,000 non-Serbs during the Bosnian war.

Randal argued that journalists should enjoy “qualified privilege” to guarantee their independence and safety. The court approved, the judges stating that before calling a journalist to appear, the court must be convinced that the “evidence has a direct and important value in determining a core issue in the case,” and that there is no reasonable alternative for obtaining the evidence.

According to Toby Sterling, an *Associated Press* writer, this decision will be seen as setting a precedent in other international courts dealing with war situations.

Randal was supported in his appeal by 34 international news organizations, including the *Washington Post*, which welcomed the decision, saying it can further journalists’ safety in the field and ability to gather information in war zones. “We’re delighted. This is, I think, a really important decision for journalism and international law. It’s just the result we were looking

for,” said *Washington Post* managing editor Steve Coll, speaking in Washington.

The court said it was in everyone’s interest for reporters to work freely in war zones, and to bring attention “to the horrors and reality of warfare.”

Randal’s British lawyer, Geoffrey Robertson, called the decision “a great boon for reporters.”

“We really welcome this verdict. It’s a watershed moment for many journalists. The appeals court has done press freedom a service today,” said the International Federation of Journalists, which represents around 500,000 journalists in more than 100 countries.

However, the prosecution in the Brdjanin case had argued that journalists should have no special privileges, and said they were no different from other international workers, such as UN and Red Cross personnel.

Is giving evidence at trials a reporter’s duty? Will this rule help maintain their neutrality? China still has no such rule, and the law stipulates that reporters have the right and responsibility to testify. Would this new ruling be accepted by Chinese people? Opinions follow:

Zhang Weiping, Professor, Law Faculty, Tsinghua University

This decision has an epoch-making meaning. For the first time, it’s been ruled that reporters have a limited privilege to refuse to testify at international level, and many countries will have to submit to this ruling.

As early as the 19th Century, limited privileges against testifying were confirmed, and are commonly enshrined in most

countries’ laws. Its main provision is that you cannot force lawyer and client, doctor and patient, husband and wife, father and son and priest and a member of his congregation to testify against each other. But reporters never had this privilege before.

This rule is to maintain the relationship of trust between such people — if you break such a relationship, you risk destroying the structure of the law.

It’s the same principle; if reporters are forced to testify in court, nobody will tell them the truth. If the subject is very sensitive, it could cause trouble to both journalists and their sources, or even endanger their lives. More seriously, reporters could be compromised, which thus can hinder the public’s right to know the truth.

In a word, this rule is progress in maturing the law, and it will be good for China to get reporters’ limited privilege against testifying.

Zhong Xin, associate professor in Department of Journalism and Communication, Renmin University of China

Journalists should get more cases where they can be exempted from testifying. As we know, the responsibility of a journalist is to find news and bring facts and opinions to the public, not that of policemen.

If this is a job, and this job is serving the public, we should protect it. It’s true that there’s a big gap between confidential sources and published sources and some journalists may lie or give incorrect information. But that’s a problem of the morality of the occupation, not that of whether we

should protect it or not.

I view forcing journalists to court as a kind of betrayal. That is, you are forcing journalists to betray his or her job, interviewees and even themselves. What’s more, no one will trust them or be willing to speak to them. This, to some extent, can kill the work of a journalist.

In China, if a source has been named, a reporter is usually compelled to testify because we now have no Journalism Law. For both journalists’ and the public’s sake, it would be good to put such a provision in any future Journalism Law.

Hu Jun, reporter, China Consumer Journal

War correspondents are not permitted to know or report military secrets at all. In many countries, war correspondents are not able to report that which is not sanctioned by the government. Under these restrictions, can war journalists have neutrality? I think not!

In the 1991 Gulf War, some war journalists leaked military secrets, which American government angered. Now, even the American government, which is thought as having a most open attitude to journalism by most reporters, won’t dare lose control of war correspondents and their reporting.

So, reporters’ neutrality? It’s a joke! We know war journalists are not only serving their newspaper but also their government and people. When their reports injure the government’s policies and decisions, the government will not make their reports open. So reporters’ freedom should benefit the country no matter whether you admit it or not.

SOUND BITES

“As a growing, vital force in the judicial circle, the opinions of practicing lawyers are very important to us.”

— Li Fan, deputy director of the research office under China’s Supreme People’s Court, saying that it has become common practice for the SPC to consult with lawyers when drafting regulations and legal explanations

“I do not believe it is necessary or should be taking place. The president is doing it because he is the commander in chief, and he believes that if he is ordering his troops ... to get this vaccination, he should do it as well.”

— Tommy Thompson, US Health and Human Services Secretary, claiming that he does not plan to be inoculated with the smallpox vaccine and recommends that other Cabinet members not request the inoculation either, since millions of American workers will be asked by the Bush administration to get a vaccine to protect themselves from smallpox, beginning as early as January 24

“We have been handicapped by this. Sen. Lott, as well as the rest of us, are going to have to work a lot harder now to attract minorities to our party, especially African-Americans.”

— Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev. regarding the remarks by Trent Lott, Senate Republican leader, who said that the country would have been better off if retiring Sen. Strom Thurmond, R-S.C., had won his 1948 presidential campaign — a crusade for “states’ rights” to maintain segregation of the races

By Chen Ying

By Su Wei

High tech, high income jobs mean demanding lifestyles with precious little time to spare searching or caring for a lifelong mate, according to over 80 percent of those surveyed.

Chen Xi, 29, software maintenance technician in a domestic computer manufacturing company, says that after a busy day in the office, he is simply too exhausted to do anything after hours. "What happens if I say "no" to my girlfriend when she asks me to go shopping with her, that is if I had a girlfriend? She would probably feel upset, and even if I agreed, I would be in a bad mood. So why make us both suffer?"

Song Wei, assistant manager in an Internet company, says he cares more about his position than going out on a date.

"Everyday there are more job seekers coming to Zhongguancun. They have clear advantages over us. They are younger. They have more knowledge, better skills. My only advantage is experience, which becomes less valuable in a society focusing on exploration and experimentation." Faced with this cruel competition, he admits that he constantly feels defeated. "If I don't want to lose my job, I need to spend more time keeping up with the industry and refreshing my knowledge."

Chen Mingshun of the Association of Marriage Law Studies points out that inhumane workload and job pressure will discourage young people from assuming their marital duties. "They place too much value on the material requirements for a stable marriage, but are afraid to lose what they have," he claims. "They then are thrown into the pursuit of a purely material life and ignore love."

Where are the girls?

The conspicuously lopsided sex ratio doesn't help either. Li Hua, assistant manager in a communication products manufacturing company, says the ratio of male to female in their company is 8:1. She quotes a popular response among her male colleagues: "It's not that we don't want to have a girlfriend. The problem is that we're always surrounded by people of the same sex."

Your place or mine?

At the same time, 90 percent of those surveyed complained that there are few places to meet and get to know people in general, and of the opposite sex in particular.

Li Tao, a software engineer, believes restaurants are the

They are young professionals of Zhongguancun Village, they are between the ages of 28 and 35, they have a master's degree or above, and their monthly salary is 5,000 yuan or more. Interested?

A survey conducted by Beijing Youth Daily and Data Sea on more than 300 Zhongguancunese says that half of them are still unmarried. Shocking?

Yours Truly, Unmarried in Zhongguancun



best place to meet people, but unfortunately, "There are few restaurants in Zhongguancun Village. They are either starred hotels or roadside take-aways.

Dining in a hotel restaurant reminds me of a formal business meal, and the take-aways bring me back to my daily busy work."

Liu Che, marketing manager of a computer component manufacturing company in the Zhongguancun Development Building, complains of the paucity of public recreation spots.

"If we want to see a movie, we have to go to the southern end of Zhongguancun Village. If we want to do some sports, we have to go to Haidian Stadium located in the center of the Village." He envies those who work near the commercialized World Trade Center district.

Most of the surveyed agree that Zhongguancun is a business ghost town — busy and crowded by day, dark and deserted by night.

Do you come here often?

Meanwhile the Zhongguancunese may have to brush up on their social skills, as nearly half of those surveyed admitted to being shy and lacking the ability to interact effectively with the mysterious opposite sex.

"Most of the professionals in Zhongguancun Science and Technology Garden are not native Beijingers. They dislike noisy social gatherings and are

used to leading a quiet life in their spare time," says a spokeswoman of the Garden's administration department, unwilling to disclose her name.

She has observed the men at a number of organized matchmaking parties. "They just sat there, waiting for the girls to come up to them first," she recalls. "When some girls do talk to them, they blush and don't know how to respond."

Others, she says, simply talk too much. "The worst is when they treat women as clients or colleagues." She remembers how a program designer once took the opportunity of a first encounter with a woman at one of these parties to introduce their newly developed software.

"He was totally unaware of the girl's lack of interest until I told him myself," she says. "Later he changed to another topic — computer games!" When the woman left unsatisfied, the young man kept asking if he had done something wrong. "He told me, 'I thought she was interested, because she never interrupted me the whole time.'"

Chen Yijun, researcher at the Institute of Sociology of China's Academy of Social Sciences, says these young professionals never received proper education regarding courtship and love. "This kind of stuff can't be learned in labs," he says. "The longer they are inhibited, the fewer opportunities

they have to cultivate their emotions, the more possibilities they have to be excluded from social life, and the more difficult it is for them to establish a romantic relationship."

What's your type?

Looks may not be everything, but they still count for something: over 40 percent of surveyed males, compared to around 28 percent of females, said physical appearance was a key factor in choosing their future spouse.

Less than a third of all surveyed would voluntarily resort to attending an organized matchmaking party, still more than the 14 percent who admitted the possibility of seeking out a serious dating agency.

Shi Rongting, assistant public relations manager, knows he could place an advertisement but chooses not to. "It's a matter of privacy. In order to place such an ad, I must ask the company to present a certificate. Then everyone will know that I'm single and looking to get married."

Li Wei, Shi's roommate, thinks the organizers of the matchmaking parties don't understand their feelings. "I don't like these parties at all. All we can do there is sing or dance after sitting like fools listening to a speech delivered by a host. How embarrassing is it to be in a roomful of people who know they are unable to find their life

partner by themselves? How can anyone who's been told the purpose of the party still behave naturally?" He would be more interested in attending activities with people of various ages, and not merely focused on playing matchmaker.

Who wears the pants in the house?

Sun Shuai, manager of customer services in an electronic component selling company, is tortured by his "preference" for one of his female colleagues, as he thinks he may not be able to "match" her. "She is right for me — good looking and good tempered. But she will be promoted to local manager, a higher position than mine. I'm afraid I may not measure up."

Chen Xinxin of the Research Institute of Marriages and Families in China says too many non-emotional factors are involved when these people consider love and marriage, mostly based on social bias.

Although women "have long been regarded as disadvantaged," men "are used to being respected for their status and still have the idea that women are their attachments." For many of these chauvinists, the family is the last place they can exert their power and gain satisfaction as alpha-males, "especially when defeated in the competitive society."

In his opinion, these people

fail to realize that the function of the family unit is downplayed in a society which now places more emphasis on the individual. "The stability of marriage is considered a weapon of defense against outside attack on the weaker individual human being," claims Chen. "Confined by traditional standards in choosing life partners, they are certain to lose much more in marriage, such as independence and freedom of time, space and thought."

So what?

Li Yinhe, another researcher at the Institute of Sociology of China's Academy of Social Sciences, confirms that there is nothing wrong with young professionals remaining single if they so choose and are happy with their lives.

She says the tragic condition of unmarried Zhongguancunese should not be exaggerated. "People's demands and desires differ and evolve with social trends and culture. In reality, it's never black and white. It's the same for love and marriage. It is the individual right of each person involved to choose his or her own lifestyle, and everyone else should respect that choice," concludes Li. "As we adapt to a variety of economic structures and social reforms in China, why can't we accept a variety of human lifestyles?"

Photo / Tony Stone

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Clean-up workers dump lime into the river to neutralize the arsenic.

Arsenic Poisons Guangxi River

A major disaster was narrowly averted last week after a truck carrying 20 tons of arsenic turned over near the upper range of the Pearl River in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, pouring about 7 tons of the lethal chemical into the river.

The authorities moved quickly, pouring more than 100 tons of lime into the river to neutralize the polluted water.

The emergency work has concluded and the water supply has returned to normal even in seriously polluted areas.

Amazingly, despite regular fishing of the river, there have been no reported arsenic poisoning cases, either for humans or animals, according to Ge Xianmin, Director of Guangxi Poison Emergency Center, who is in charge of the arsenic clean-up work. Ge said the large amount of lime would not cause any serious pollution.

The accident aroused nationwide attention. Even the central government and the State Council were alerted and vice premier Wu Bangguo requested that the case be handled in a proper manner.

The question being asked now is how did this happen in the first place? What are the regulations for transporting dangerous chemicals in China and was this a freak occurrence, or an accident waiting to happen?

Arsenic dumped

At noon last Wednesday (December 11), a local truck turned over on a 60 meter-high hillside and tumbled down into Sandu river in Jinxiu Yao Minority Autonomous County, Liuzhou, Guangxi Province.

The road was damp due to heavy rain. When the truck met another oncoming vehicle it swerved to avoid it and turned over. The other vehicle drove away afterwards, according to an unnamed rescue worker.

The truck was loaded with 100 barrels containing 20 tons of arsenic. Thirty three of the barrels slipped into the river. Thirty barrels were ruptured and began to shed their deadly contents into the river.

The local authorities were

informed and they immediately mobilized more than 1,000 people to get involved in the clean up work, dumping lime into the river to neutralize the arsenic. Polluted plants on the hillside were dealt with and 11 embankments were created to divert the polluted water.

"According to experts, this is the first time in the world lime was used to neutralize the polluted water," Wang Liming, a reporter from CCTV said. "In the past, sodium has been used. But lime is much more cost-effective and easy to exploit locally."

The polluted water was estimated to have run for seven kilometers along the river. In Qijian town, signs were put up along the river warning locals not to drink water or eat fish from the river. The signs read: "River is poisoned. No drinking", "No fishing in the river" and "No dead fish or shrimps taken from the river to be sold".

Local villagers said the government informed them immediately and they have not heard of any poisoning cases. No panic was caused. Their biggest concern is the inconvenience of having to go a long way to get water, making their drinking, showering, laundry and watering the fields difficult.

Water utilities along the river have even resumed normal water supply and staff at the utilities keep testing the water samples.

Refinery plant closed

"The accident happened during the transportation. The dangerous material was being transported without any purchase license," said Liang Yong'an, the deputy general secretary of Liuzhou District Administration, Guangxi. "The vehicle was overloaded. We have already detained the persons involved in the case and their property is in our control."

The arsenic producer, Sanjiao Refinery Plant, started production in 1982. As soon as this accident happened, production was halted. Since the beginning of this year, the plant has produced a total of more than 200 tons of arsenic.

A woman surnamed Luo in the Sanduhe village said livestock in their village died due to pollution from the refinery plant and that

harvests had been harmed. Local farm products can no longer be sold at the market.

"There is a big pool full of slag in the plant. Whenever it rains, the pool overflows," Luo said with anger. "The water is poisonous. Once a kid crossed the river and walked through the water released from the plant. His feet became diseased and could not be cured. He later became disabled."

Many villagers have developed skin problems which they believe are related to smoke released from the refinery plant in the neighborhood.

Tackle the problems

Safety Rules for Dangerous Chemicals were promulgated in China this March, including requirements for the qualifications of people involved in chemical transportation.

So how did this accident happen if regulations were in place?

For one thing, the desire to make profits has driven many companies to transport goods illegally. Also, the loose regulations on quality of transporters in the past has encouraged many people to bend the rules and neglect the serious effect of chemical accidents, according to Cheng Yunshu, deputy director of the Safety Supervision Division, State Administration of Work Safety Supervision.

"We are constantly worried. An accident could happen at any time," said Cheng. "The conditions of transportation in our country are still very poor. If we don't set out to tighten security control, more accidents like this are bound to occur."

Cheng said great importance had been attached to the safety problem. "We are also ready to establish regional emergency rescue organizations, such as regional rescue centers, consultation centers and information centers based on the characteristics and economic situation of the local region."

But, he said, moves to ensure safe production should be the top priority.

Sources: Information Times, Beijing Youth Daily, CCTV Oriental Horizons program.

Edited by Ivy Zhang/Lisa Lee

Guilty or Not?

Law enforcement officials will face justice for taking no action while a pregnant woman was being axed to death

By Wu Sanmeng / Ivy Zhang

A hearing for two men charged with neglect of duty opened this Monday at Wuyuan County Court, Gansu Province.

In April this year, a local primary school teacher who was four months pregnant was slashed 78 times with an axe by her jealous husband.

During the two hour-long bloody assault, Shan Huizhong, the director of Weiyuan County Judicial Bureau, failed to take any action to intervene and prevented others from helping the woman for fear of taking any responsibility. As a result, the woman died.

Shan, along with Yang Haiping, a local police officer, was prosecuted late last month. Both had been removed from office four months earlier.

In the courtroom, Shan said he had not been on duty at the time of the assault and that he was merely in the village that day for personal reasons. He said he should perhaps face moral condemnation but no legal punishment.

"I should not have to face any criminal liability," he said. "But I'm willing to receive administrative disciplinary punishment and whatever moral judgment is considered appropriate."

"It might have been better if I had given orders to subdue the criminal. But if my orders brought about serious consequences, I would have been accused of exceeding my authority," said Shan.

The bloody day

According to a report in *Lanzhou Morning Post*, Sun Xiangyu, 38, was a teacher at Liuying Primary School in Puchuan town, Weiyuan County, Gansu.

Her Husband, Jiang Weitang, was a laid off employee from Lianfeng Township Grain Administration in the same county. He suffered from epilepsy.

Jiang suspected his wife was having an affair with the school's headmaster Xue Shujie and he often insulted and beat Sun.

Around 8:20 in the morning of April 11, Jiang, carrying an axe, appeared on the campus, shouting and chopping at the doors of Sun's room and the headmaster's office. Sun, who was giving a class, was informed of what was happening and was asked to persuade her husband to stop.

Seeing the state Jiang was in, Sun rushed to a small drug store opposite the school to call Jiang's father for help.

Jiang followed her, broke through the surrounding villagers and entered the drug store.

Xue, the headmaster, tried to grab the axe from Jiang but failed. He rushed back to the school to call the police.

In the drug store, Jiang pulled out the phone cord, put it round Sun's neck, ripped open her clothes and started slashing at her.

At 8:40, Yang Haiping, the local police officer arrived. He wanted to break into the drug store but Jiang threatened: "If you come in, I'll kill her right now." Yang had to withdraw and call for backup.

At 9:10, a police car carrying Shan arrived. But Shan refused to organize a rescue saying nobody

but the police director had the power to give orders for such a rescue.

"This man could do anything to us. But if we do something to him, we will be held responsible," Shan said, according to a witness. When the town head Yang Zhengxing offered to help, Shan told him, "You can't. You have no power either."

At 10:10, when Jiang's father and brother-in-law arrived, Jiang stepped out and was taken away by the police.

On June 8, Jiang died during an epileptic fit at Tianshui mental home.

In the wake of the tragedy, hundreds of students and villagers appealed for higher authorities to look into this case.

In late July, seven officials who had been at the scene of the murder were punished, being either demoted or fired.

Police officer feels victimized

Yang Haiping, who was charged with neglect of duty in the case, said he felt he had been treated unjustly during the hearing on Monday.

He said he had made three attempts to enter the drug store and negotiate with the criminal after he arrived on the site.

The first time, Jiang threatened to kill Sun, so he had to withdraw in consideration of the victim's safety; the second time, he withdrew again for fear that Jiang would try to kill him as well; the third time, he requested to try and save the victim but was ordered not to by Shan.

Yang claimed other leaders of judicial bodies were present at the scene and he himself was incapable of saving Sun because he only had a pair of handcuffs.

If he had had a gun, Yang said he could have shot the criminal. So he did not dare to take the risk to rescue the woman before people from the public security bureau came around.

A moral or a legal matter?

In the courtroom, Shan denied having said that nobody but the police director had the power to give orders for a rescue, or that he had told town head Yang Zhengxing not to intervene.

Shan claimed he had not been called to the scene in an official capacity, saying he was merely passing by. He was in the village, he said, to "collect antiques and paintings".

Shan's lawyer Zhang Xiangdong said Shan should not bear criminal liability because he was incapable of rescuing the teacher. Thus, he could only be condemned morally for his taking no initiative to help and should be acquitted of any criminal charges. Hearing this, Shan's family applauded in the courtroom.

But the public prosecutor disagreed.

The prosecution case is that Shan, as a government member, failed to take action when a person's life was at risk, resulting in the death of Sun Xiangyu.

The prosecution alleges Shan is guilty of the crime of neglect of duty, which carries a severe penalty. The court will shortly make its decision.



Murderers? Or just discreet bureaucrats?

Photo by Wu Sanmeng

Wild in the Country



Concert at the Great Wall this August
Photo by Demone

By Yu Shanshan

Zhang Qianqian has come a long way from the days when she belted out punk-influenced music in seedy bars in Guangzhou. She has developed other talents including painting and writing and says she's still a country girl at heart. Does this mean the wild child has mellowed with age?

A unique voice

Zhang Qianqian was born the eldest of three children in Dingxi, Gansu Province. She believes her artistic nature was inspired by roaming the hills and rivers around her home, where her mother worked as a country doctor. Her love of nature remained after the family moved to Yushu in Qinghai Province to join her father's army unit when Qianqian was seven.

"I got close to nature. An artist needs that. I used wild strawberries as lipstick and mud in the brook as soap," she recalls. "That's how my love for all beauty started."

When she was 11 years old, Qianqian discovered a fondness for the violin. "My first impression of music was in my father's feeling out *Butterfly Lovers* on my 30 yuan child-size violin," Qianqian said. "He was a remote man who did not show much emotion. But he supported my learning the violin firmly." A visiting violin teacher from the Qinghai Arts School noticed the young student and decided to give her a chance.

"My father and mother didn't have a close relationship," she reveals. "I was always considering leaving home as I felt oppressed by the atmosphere there. And to study in an arts school was a good chance for me."

Unfortunately, she was not an obedient student, either at school or in the orchestra of Qinghai Opera Troupe.

"I hated all these people telling me what to do. I preferred feeling my way into something slowly and spontaneously." Disliking the set music pieces of the orchestra, Qianqian often created something new herself. Her six years of boarding school ingrained some enduring characteristics, independence and the desire to escape in particular.

Saying she intended to search for a position in the orchestra of Zhujiang Film Production Company, Qianqian went to Guangzhou in 1992 when she was 18. Instead she got a job as a model for Meidi air conditioners. For a while, modeling became the main income source for this 1.63-metre tall girl who looks slighter and much younger than her actual age.



Photo provided by Zhang Qianqian

Three years later, tired of being seen just as a hollow image, she upped sticks again. "I finally went to where I had really wanted to go to from the beginning — Beijing."

In the capital, supporting herself with the occasional modeling job, Qianqian signed with Hong Kong Red Star Music Co. in 1996, and began focusing on the talent that would bring her fame across China, singing.

She paid to publish her first single *Can* in 1996. She had written the song in one hour. She made her name with the release of singles such as *Zhang Qianqian's Balcony* in 1997, *Disillusion* in 2000, her 2001 album *Spirit Away* and continuous gigs in Beijing. Aided by a look that ranged from girl-next-door to seductress, Qianqian found a receptive audience for her distinctive style. Hers was an ambitious blend of Chinese folk music with Bjork-style eccentricity, bound together by her penetrating, mysterious voice. But shortly after *Spirit Away* was released, Qianqian resigned from Red Star because of pressure to become more commercial.

"It's a matter of different tastes — they wanted to sell more records, but I wanted to preserve my style," she said. "Now when I listen to my songs written before entering Red Star, I am still sure those songs were on the right track. Purely individual voices have a lasting power which commercial pop music never will have."

Finding the ideal

Qianqian later decided to settle down with her little sister, who is ten years younger, in Guangzhou. She still sings but these days she also draws, writes, acts and still models. Her choices have been characteristically daring. *Fish and Elephant*, released in 2000, was the first film in China to depict a lesbian relationship.

Qianqian feels totally free in writing and drawing. "This is my real signature, without any compromise at all," she wrote in her latest book *The Charm of Charms*, a collection of essays and poems which was published by the Writers' Publishing House.

Despite her lack of professional training, her drawings have attracted critical acclaim. In 1995, she held her first exhibition in Beijing. Someone even wanted to buy one of her paintings, but the artist turned them down. Qianqian had prepared herself for a rougher reception for her paintings. "You must have a very large capacity for rejection as an artist, standing firmly as the root of a tree," she said, "if you want to protect your flowers of creativity."

Despite her many ups and downs, Qianqian remains an idealist. This has been both a burden and a release for her, particularly in relationships. Some years ago, she fell in love with a young architect but the couple were unable to find any middle ground. She later met a Japanese

drummer but they only had time for art and none for the ordinary trifles of everyday life. "I am still seeking the kind of love John Lennon and Yoko Ono had. They got on so well even though they were both pure artists. Now I am waiting for an older and experienced mentor who can guide my life ahead."

All grown up

Qianqian has had to become tough to pursue her ambitions. Marked out by her northwestern accent in Guangzhou, she painted her eyebrows pink and lips purple and screamed out her lyrics in bars making them even harder to understand.

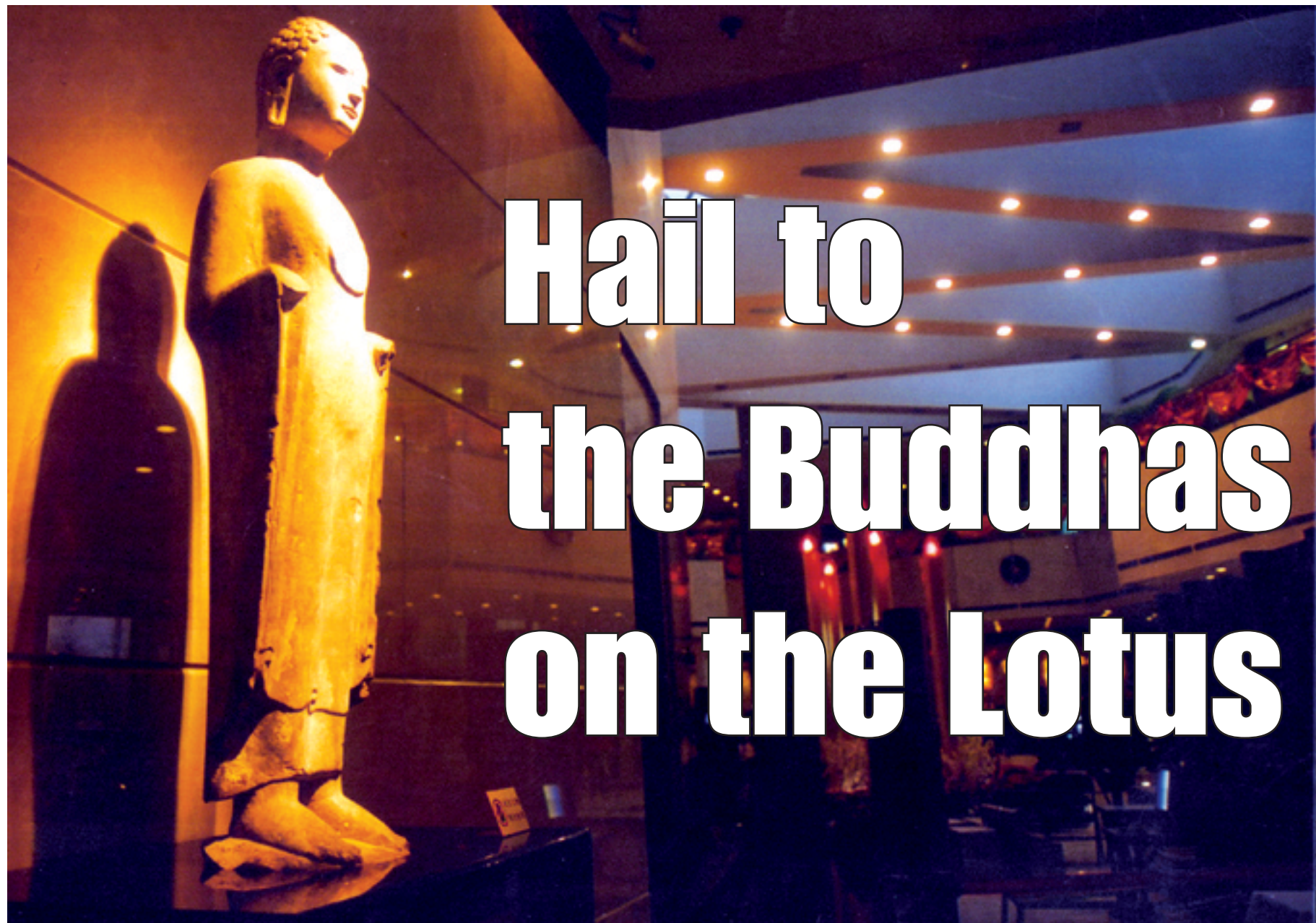
"I was really very volatile," she says. "I wanted to get into more extreme music, something darker and more outrageous." But she feels writing has taught her to look at the world more calmly. "I realize that plain nar-

ration can bring readers closer to my experience and my surprise. This attitude towards writing has also changed how I conduct myself in society."

Since her last book was published in August, the country girl has become a regular in book review columns and celebrity magazines. "I also want a better life, which involves money, like other people," she confessed.

She's about to spend some time with her parents and siblings, who, despite seeing her fame, can't quite comprehend what she has in mind. "For them," says Qianqian, "I'm someone who is adventurous, who is doing something else, somewhere else, again."





Hail to the Buddhas on the Lotus

By Iris Miao

In the city of Beijing, you might pass by a piece of ancient history everyday without even knowing it. Cultural relics of China's past have become part of our daily environment.

Over 110 precious artworks, including Buddha statues, bronze wares, pottery figures, and painting and calligraphy scrolls, as well as a bronze *gui*, food vessel with beast mask design dating back to as early as the Western Zhou Dynasty (11 c-770 BC), are all on display in the lobby of the Poly Plaza.

"We are the first and only one to display such a collection of treasures for free to the public, in the lobby of a hotel," says Jiang Yingchun, curator of the Poly Museum. "We are inaugurating an open museum."

The advantage of an open museum for viewers is that none of the artifacts, for example the three Buddha statues and one Buddha head, are displayed behind glass. Although it's always better not to touch, visitors may get as close as possible to the antiques in order to thoroughly examine their colors, texture and



craftsmanship.

Poly Group gained popularity in 1999 when it spent some ten million yuan at an auction in Hong Kong for three bronze animal heads originally stolen from Yuanmingyuan in 1860 by the British and French invaders. Many of its collections were purchased overseas, including the three Buddha statues standing in the lobby at the entrance of the Poly Theater.

One of the standing Buddhas, 96 cm in height, dates from the Northern Qi Dynasty (550 - 577 AD) and is estimated to have originated from the area of Qingzhou, in Shandong Province.

The statue, standing bare-footed

on the lotus, is beautifully proportioned with extended arms, a smiling square face, and closed eyes. The fabric of its *kasaya* is soft and transparent, delicately draped around the contours of the body. According to Li Chongfeng, associate professor from the Department of Archaeology of Beijing University, this statue combines artistic features of Chinese and Indian Buddhism. Characteristics of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386 - 534) can be seen in its face.

The tallest of the three, standing at 123 centimeters, is a gilt and colorfully painted Buddha, also from the Northern Qi Dynasty. It wears a thin *kasaya* with plain clothing. The statue's fine carving highlights the round face, plump body and thin, tight

kasaya, which all were popular characteristics of that period.

Standing Buddha statues with thin tight *kasayas* revealing their figures are mostly found in Shandong Province. Basic distinguishing characteristics of the Northern Qi Dynasty statues were identified from over 400 statues discovered at the relics site of Longxing Temple in Qingzhou in 1996. For example, dresses were thin and transparent, carved in double-lines. Single standing Buddha statues of the late Northern Qi Dynasty were more likely to have tight and thin clothing showing their figures, and fewer designs were carved into the clothing. All the statues were colorfully painted, with squares drawn on their *kasayas*, and human figures were usually drawn inside the squares.

Now you can choose to examine one artifact at a time, to dwell on its history, to appreciate its beauty, and to walk away with a bit more of ancient China in your heart.

Photos by Zhuang Jian



Terra-cotta head of government official unearthed in 2000. Photo by Yan Wenqing

High Tech Survey of Qinshihuang Mausoleum

By He Yiyi

In order to penetrate the two-thousand-year-old mystery of the Qinshihuang Mausoleum in Xi'an, tomb of the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC), archaeologists recently inaugurated a new geographical surveying system using the most advanced technology and the most invested capital in the history of the area, especially to shed light on the tomb's precious underground palace.

Qinshihuang Mausoleum is the largest mausoleum in China's history, the result of 38 years of labor by 700,000 workers. So far, discovered relics sites include pits 1, 2 and 3 of terra-cotta warriors, the bronze cranes pit, fish pond ruins, a stone armor factory and a large area of ancient architecture.

The protection and excavation of the tomb has been going on for over 40 years, but all the amazing discoveries made so far are just the tip of the iceberg, and the pit burying the famous terra-cotta warriors of the mausoleum has yet to be explored. Countless treasures are still sleeping underground, affirm experts.

Surveying the tomb's total 56.25 square kilometers using traditional archaeological equipment would take at least 200 years. This time, major new technologies, including remote sensing and physical and chemical earth surveying, will be used to determine the location, size and depth of the underground palace.

However, some experts were quite conservative about the issue. Well-known expert Liu Yunhui said that remote sensing has already been widely used in other fields such as astronomy, and mainly in exceptional cases. "But without basic knowledge, traditional archaeological measures are still necessary."

The overall exploration of the Qinshihuang Mausoleum is estimated to be finished in about five years.



Pit 1 of terra-cotta warriors.

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When the Camera Is Mightier than the Sword

By Sun Yan

“I want to take the genre in a new direction. In my story the goal is the negation of violence. The characters are motivated by their desire to end the war. For real martial arts masters, true heroes, the heart is far more important than the sword.”

(Zhang Yimou)

The director is defensive of his film as “just another kung fu movie,” and his filmmaking techniques are true to his intentions. His work is less an action thriller than a poetic fable, with little dialogue and spectacular results.

As a veteran cinematographer, Zhang Yimou first paints the picture to tell the story. And several stories are told, each narrated with a different focus, each tinted with a different hue.

His visual obsession is further explored in the detailed accuracy of costumes and décor, as actors don specially dyed clothing of varying tones and textures to battle over backdrops of seasonally colored foliage, complete with a systematic classification of yellow leaf accessories.

“Wuxia (martial arts fiction) is a fantasy world that exists in your mind, and it's fascinating to translate these ideas into physical action. For instance, the strength and speed of an attacking sword can be described in such a way that is left wide open to the imagination. Recreating this feeling in less than one second of action is a marvelous challenge.”

(Zhang Yimou)

Since half the film abounds in martial arts action, kung fu choreographer Tony Ching Siu-tung toned down his own intense fighting style to adapt to the director's poetic vision. As a result, *Hero* is the perfect combination of powerful combat and aesthetic grace.

Scenes of the two female protagonists chasing and fighting each other among whirling yellow leaves are staged like an elegant fairy dance, with deadly precision. Asked to compare his work with *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* choreographer Yuen Wo-ping's, Cheng answers coyly: “He's power, I'm beauty.”

It is hard to say whether the film is brightened by the stars or vice versa, but no doubt *Hero* owes at least part of its success to its impressive cast.

One of China's most promising actors, Chen Daoming, gives a new and unique interpretation of the traditionally mad Emperor Qin, portraying him as noble and sound of mind and spirit. Kung fu film star Jet Li, duels it out with his former kung fu classmate Donnie Yen.

Tony Leung and Maggie Cheung, already lovers in the internationally popular *In the Mood for Love*, resurrect their amorous relationship in a more tragic romance. No need to mention the lunar attraction of Zhang Ziyi.

“There's a Chinese maxim that says if you're playing a perfect drum, you don't need to pound it. The gentlest tap is all it takes to get what I want from such capable actors.”

(Zhang Yimou)

Meanwhile, Australian director of photography Christopher Doyle, cult cinematographer of Hong Kong filmmaker Wong Kar-Wai's neon reels, has impressed the film with his characteristically filtered lens.

The film's musical score was composed by Tan Dun of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* fame, and is performed by well-known violinist Itzhak Perlman, who claims the music expresses a feeling of desolation. *Hero* will open to the public on December 20.

I have always been a fan of heroic fiction, so I have longed to make a martial arts film ever since I became a filmmaker. However Hero is more of an oriental fairy tale set in ancient China than a pure kung fu film, and of course I have added my own interpretation of Chinese culture.

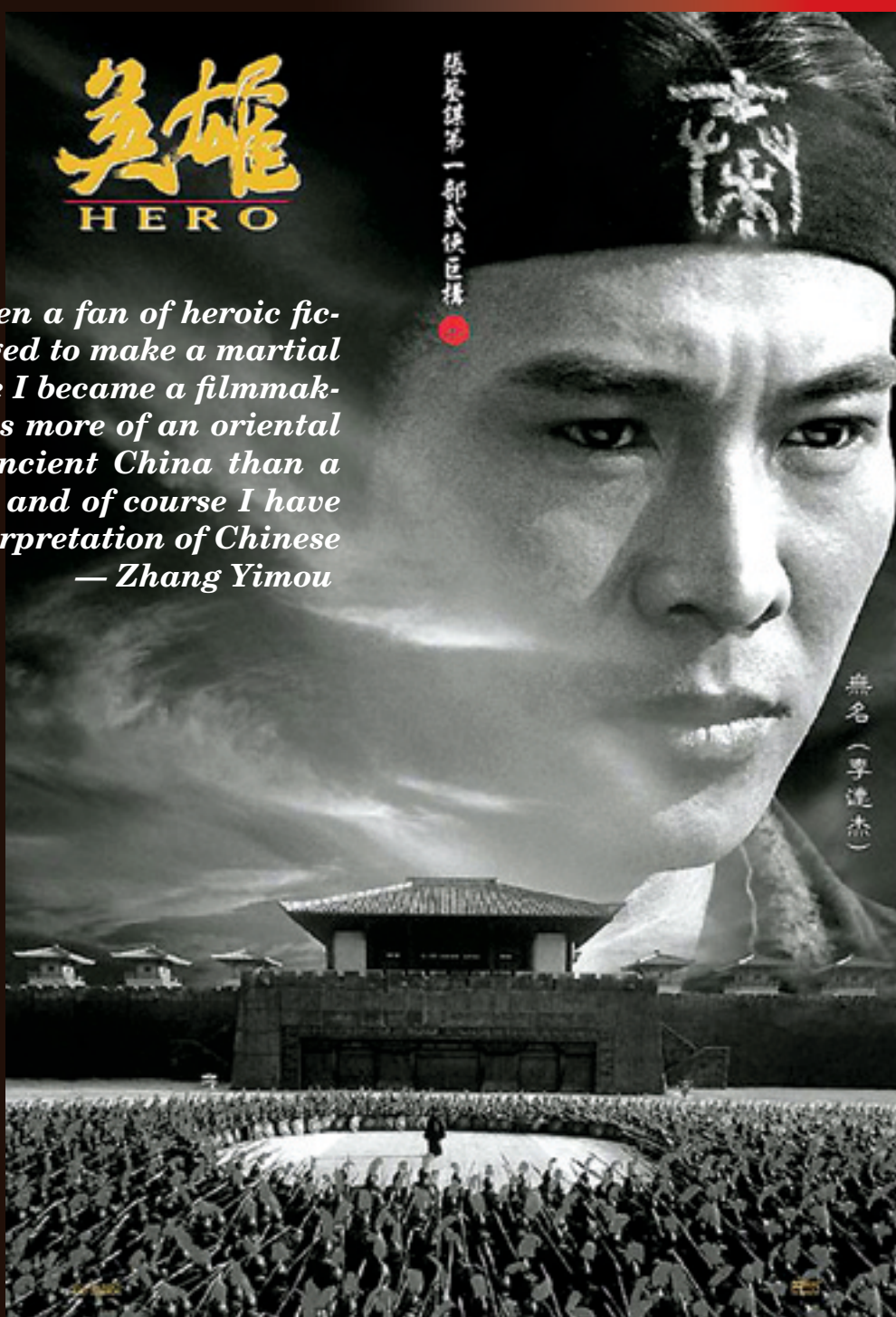
— Zhang Yimou



Wu Ming (Jet Li)



Ru Yue (Zhang Ziyi)



During the late Warring States period (475-221 BC) of China, seven kingdoms fought to gain supremacy over a potentially unified country. Since the kingdom of Qin was the strongest, Emperor Qin became the common enemy of six other kingdoms, and many from the weaker six volunteered to assassinate him.

Only the nameless assassin Wu Ming (Jet Li) was able to claim audience with the Emperor by telling him the stories of how he defeated the country's three most feared assassins: Can Jian (Tony Leung), Fei Xue (Maggie Cheung), and Chang Kong (Donnie Yen). Only after he has concluded his narration does he discover that the powerful Emperor he had plotted to kill was also a hero.



Can Jian (Tony Leung)



Fei Xue (Maggie Cheung)

Audience reactions

“Zhang Yimou is a great storyteller. The whole story evolved from the verbal confrontation between Wu Ming and Emperor Qin. The plot was smooth and clear, although the relationships were fairly complex. The dialogues were full of orientalism, and the characters were very Chinese in their ways of loving, of hating, and even of thinking of death. Then of course there were beautiful landscapes of China, sword fighting, calligraphy, Go, and an ancient Chinese zither. No doubt that *Hero* is ‘made in China.’”

“I haven't seen a film like this in a long time. When it was over, people were in tears and reminded each other to preserve their tickets. This film is so unique, it deserves to make us wait 400 days to see it.”

“I got déjà-entendu of Tan Dun. The opening violin solo is almost identical to the opening solo of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. Then there was that same drum beating again when Wu Ming was fighting with Chang Kong. It made you feel like *Hero* was some kind of sequel to *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. But other than the music, I thought it was great.”

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Life at the Bottom

By Wang Chunzhu

“I just want to live, for the sake of living itself!” Chou’er declares. This is the theme of *The Life of Chou’er*, which expresses the true feelings of ordinary people who struggle for survival. Last Thursday night at China Children’s Theatre, the premiere of *The Life of Chou’er* drew the audience’s attention to the plight of people on the lowest rung of society’s ladder.

The two-hour performance of *The Life of Chou’er* consists of four independent stories ranging from the 1920s till today with Chou’er becoming older as the play moves back in time. *Spring* (2002) is full of life and vitality, in which Chou’er is an innocent boy at the age of 20;



Photo by Qian Bingge

Summer (1980s) stands for desire and passion, when 30 year old Chou’er finds he has no purpose in life; *Autumn* (1960s) symbolizes maturity and harvest, in which Chou’er becomes a more sophisticated middle-aged man; *Winter* (1920s) indicates sobriety and reflection, as Chou’er becomes an old man in his sixties. In each act, Chou’er meets a woman who has a certain influence on him.

The carefully organized structure and plot show the ability of the screenwriter, Hang Cheng, who is also the director of the play. As a journalist, Hang Cheng has watched and reported on numerous dramas in the lives of ordinary people. It is the first time for him to be an organizer instead of an observer, and it has proved to be a success.

Hang Cheng shows his respect for his subjects. “The four

stories cover 80 years,” he says, “but there’s one thing that links them together, which is the power of life that one possesses when facing obstacles.”

Zhai Xiaoxing acts the role of Chou’er throughout the whole play, and Liu Tianchi manages to play the roles of the four different women. Both of them received rousing applause from the audience after the play for their inspired performance.

Walking in an Occult Wonderland

By Jenny Wang

With their MC dressed as an astronaut, the audience in Poly Theatre last Friday knew they were in for something unusual at the premiere of *Tour of Occult Wonderland* by China National Song & Dance Ensemble.

The two-hour performance presented traditional Chinese song and dance and a variety of other entertainments such as acrobatics and conjuring.

The trampoline show in *Knife Edges in the Jungle* and conjuring performance in *Love under*

the Moon created quite a stir. And the appearance of a real deer and a real peacock on the stage gave the audience a surprise.

Even in traditional dance, modern flavors could be found. *Kindled Love* borrowed from Hip Hop. *Mysterious Veil* mixed both Xinjiang and Egyptian dance together. The one that struck people most was Li Nan’s duet with Liu Hao. The rhythm of the traditional dance, together with the form of modern dance, had a strong visual impact.



Photo by Qian Bingge

Waiting for Na Ying

By Wang Chunzhu

Nearly a thousand fans braved the icy temperatures last Saturday and waited outside Melody karaoke bar in Chaoyang District for the arrival of pop singer Na Ying.

As one of the leading lights in the Chinese music scene, Na Ying has consistently put out high quality albums, including *Conquer*, *Without Further Ado*, and *I am not an Angel*. On November 7 this year, her new al-

bum *Till Now* was released in Macao.

A month later, Na Ying brought her new album to the Chinese mainland, and the long queue outside Melody waiting for her to sign their new copies proved her enduring popularity in Beijing.

Co-produced by Shen Guangyuan and Luo Hongwu, *Till Now* maintains Na Ying’s usual singing style: sentimental, melancholy but easy-going. And

the new album shows a more delicate and mature Na Ying. “What I’m concerned with is just how to express my feelings, nothing fancy,” she says.



Cover of Till Now

Norwegian Concert Mass Comes to China

By Wang Chunzhu

From the North, the pilgrim comes to the mighty lands of the East. The strange sound of his words and melodies in his new surroundings make up the concert mass of *The Pilgrim*, which was held last Sunday night at the Century Theatre.

The Pilgrim, composed by Sigvald Tveit of Norway with text by Harald Olsen, tells the story of a pilgrim coming from the West to China, encountering eastern culture, music, spirituality and faith. This meeting between East and West is based on a deep fascination and interest in Chinese and Norwegian folk music traditions.

The Beijing performance was the premiere of *The Pilgrim* in the Chinese mainland. Gunner Stubseid presented to Beijing audiences for the first time the peculiar artistic charm of the Hardanger violin, Norway’s national instrument, and Composer Sigvald Tveit came to China to supervise the rehearsal of China Film Philharmonic Orchestra and Baroque Chamber Chorus.

WORLDWIDE



Director Todd Haynes (right) and star Julianne Moore

Far From Heaven Tops NY Critics Awards

Far From Heaven, Todd Haynes’ sumptuous homage to the Technicolor melodramas of the 1950s, was the big winner Monday at the New York Film Critics Circle Awards, taking honors for best film and best director.

The movie also won in the categories of best supporting actor (Dennis Quaid), best supporting actress (Patricia Clarkson) and cinematography (Edward Lachman). (AP)



Elijah Wood as Frodo and Sean Astin as Sam in *The Lord of The Rings: The Two Towers*

Second Ring Feels Better for Elijah

Lord of the Rings star Elijah Wood isn’t feeling the pressure he felt a year ago.

The blockbuster success of 2001’s *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* has made the upcoming release of the second film in the series a less trying experience, Wood told reporters.

“It changes things this time around because I think we had to prove something at that point. If the first one didn’t do well, then that wouldn’t have boded well for the other two films,” the 21-year old actor said. “This time around, having that be so successful, I think it’s a little bit more relaxing.” (AP)

Disney Seeks Treasure Rescue Overseas

After crossing \$1 billion at the overseas box office for the eighth year in a row — a Hollywood record — Walt Disney Co. is facing another challenge: salvaging something from *Treasure Planet*’s domestic demise.

The company’s Buena Vista Intl. (BVI) arm is using a new campaign, positioning the film more firmly as a fun-filled toon for family audiences; it’s also opening *Treasure Planet* well away from Warner Bros.’ *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* in the U.K. and Japan — among the strongest markets

for Disney animation.

Planet has grossed \$16 million in its first bunch of foreign markets, performing especially well in France, and BVI president Mark Zoradi expects the picture to hit \$80 million, which he’d rate as a success. (Variety)

Michael J. Fox Gets Walk of Fame Star

Actor Michael J. Fox received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame on Monday.



Actor Michael J. Fox lifts his star.

Fox, best known for his roles in the *Back to the Future* movie trilogy and his portrayal of Alex P. Keaton in NBC’s *Family Ties*, said he was glad to have brought some happiness into people’s lives.

“It’s a great thing to do for a living,” he said after posing next to his star on Hollywood Boulevard in front of the Hollywood Galaxy Theatre complex. (AP)



Doug Liman at the Los Angeles premiere of *The Bourne Identity*

Liman Revs Up for Chips Update

Director Doug Liman (*The Bourne Identity*) is helping to develop an update of the 1970s action classic *CHiPs* for NBC.

Unlike the original, which starred Larry Wilcox (Jon) and Erik Estrada (Ponch) as two motorcycle cops in Los Angeles, the update will be set in San Francisco.

“At the end of the day, it’s still a show about guys who ride extremely fast motorcycles for a living,” said Liman.

The project was set up by Warner Bros. TV, which brought in Liman’s.

(Variety)

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Swedish for Christmas

By Huang Lisha

If you don't want to trek round Beijing's markets in search of the perfect Christmas decoration, take a trip up to the North Third Ring Road where you'll find everything you need to be fully equipped for the holidays. From traditional to modern, IKEA has every style of decoration to suit your home, including some famous brand names.

This year, the STRALA collection features hanging clusters of star-shaped lights, sure to give your home a warm Christmas atmosphere (119



Festa metal tealights

yuan). If you prefer the comfort of the flickering flame, there is an extensive range of candles, including colorful block candles, by RIMMA. Four different colored blocks are placed in a small rectangular plate at the very reasonable price of 39 yuan. And if you have candles, then you should have tealights to display them. Drop a small candle inside, and watch how they give a warm glow to your room. FESTA makes two kinds of tealights, an elegant one of white porcelain, a steal at only 9 yuan, and a cup-shaped metal one at 39 yuan.



Cushions for lovers

The hexagonal silver ROTTERA lantern is made of pieces of bright glass on which are delicate white snowflake patterns. With a lit candle inside, the effect is like a gift from an exotic Arabian Palace, and the price is 29 yuan. To complete the illusion, take a look at some of the cushions on sale, among which the heart-shaped cushions of SAMLAS are the favorite of many young couples.

If this hasn't given you a few ideas, then the IKEA Christmas Collection includes vases, tablecloths, glassware and gift wrap — everything your home needs to face the biggest party of the year. Happy holidays!

Where: No. 27, Beisanhuan Zhonglu, Xicheng District
Open: 10 am – 9 pm **Tel:** 6200 2345

Novel Gifts to Warm True Heart

By Salinda

Christmas is on the way and the shops are filled with gifts and presents. Come Christmas day, your friends and loved ones might be expecting a little something special.



Lighter or chocolate?

But for a gift with a difference, head over to the Huawei Store in Xidan. The 6th floor is packed with creative and funny gifts at reasonable prices, especially for youngsters. The myriad selection on display may prove a trifle dazzling, but you are sure to find that perfect something among the thousands of choices.



Photos by Chen Shuyi

One of the top selling items this year is an ordinary wooden box. Why? The box contains a hidden secret. First your friends will have to work out how to open it, but when they succeed, a mysterious surprise will be theirs. You can buy these secret boxes in different sizes, priced from 20 to 80 yuan.

For all you lovers out there, to give a heart-shaped light in place of red candle will really express your devotion. But when the bulb is switched on, the veins on the glass seems like blood vessels, to give the effect of a real heart — it's up to you whether you feel this

is romantic or not!

Perhaps your boyfriend said he had given up smoking and turned to chocolate instead. But be careful, he could be trying to trick you. In Huawei you can buy a lighter which looks like a piece of Dove chocolate, amongst other things (price 10 yuan).

Besides these novelty items, you can really give something of yourself this Christmas by having your voice or image made into a special gift for your friends. At Huawei, you will find both recording and photo studios. Your photo can be made into a personal Christmas card, or give a



Light up your love life!



Festive wrapping at Huawei store

recording of yourself singing your favorite tunes!

After some serious shopping, there are packing stands to gift-wrap your purchases, adding to that special Christmas feeling. The owner of the stands has his own way of wrapping, to individually design elegant and exquisite styles according to the shape of your gifts on the spot.

Where: The 6th floor of Xidan Huawei Shop, Xicheng District
Open: 9 am – 9 p

What's your favorite shop, stand, bar or restaurant? We will be very happy to share your experience with all our readers and a mystery gift is waiting for you if we print your story. Please contact us at 6590-2522. E-mail: shopping@ynet.com.

Stores, shops, markets and malls are already overflowing with a rich selection of X'mas gifts in preparation for the seasonal rush. Shopping for the holidays is a good excuse to get into the festive spirit and jazz up your home in the cold winter. Here are some ideas for spicing up the presents and the decorations.

Christmas Cheer at Bargain Prices

By Liang Hongling

Christmas is the time for gatherings, relaxation and family reunions. Get in the right mood with bright and colorful Christmas decorations.

You will find a wide variety of traditional goods at Tiancheng market, and the best thing is that they are much cheaper than most other places in Beijing. First the tree, priced from 60 yuan to 120 yuan, depending on size. And what every well-dressed tree needs, the decorations. You can find every kind of Christmas decoration known to man - fairy lights, candles, toys, animals, stars, Christmas balls and bells of all colors and sizes. For a different touch, try the fairy lights that twinkle if you touch them. Huge red and green stockings for hanging on the wall, sure to be your children's favorite. The garlands, tinsel and artificial wreaths are another highlight of the Christmas collection - help push the winter darkness away by hanging a wreath on your door.



Preserved fruits

For every Christmas celebration, you definitely need Santa hats! Here you cannot only buy ordinary "Father" Christmas hats, but also the less traditional "Mother" Christmas ones, recognizable by two braids hanging down the back! In fact, if you wish to dress up as Santa on Christmas morning, you can find everything you need for that traditional Santa look. Christmas is coming and with careful planning you can get more than you give this holiday.

Where: No.54, Zhongguancun Nandajie, Haidian District
Open: 9 am – 5 pm **Tel:** 6217 6170

Oh, Christmas Tree...

By Salinda

As Christmas approaches, we look forward to the arrival of Santa Claus bearing bundles of gifts ... but where to get that essential decoration for the home, the tree?

Step in to the warmth and festive cheer of the Laitai Flower Market Center. The Market itself is decorated in this year's must-have colors, bronze and coffee, interspersed with gold, silver and green, adding to the whole atmosphere of the shopping expedition.

In the run up to Christmas, the market is holding a grand Christmas sale. Trees, candleholders, Christmas wreaths and all the other decorations you need to brighten up your home for Christmas can be found. For the larger space, they will also design wreaths for hotel lobbies and restaurants. New products include artificial fiber-optic trees and Christmas angels.

Candles and lighting are a really simple way to change the look of a room. Try a red lampshade to create an intimate feel. Or why not use fairy lights somewhere other than on the tree to make a magic corner? And candles, whatever the color can be special. Group small candles together on a tray of the same or contrasting color and place on the table or windowsill.

Because most companies in the market sell direct, everything is available at bargain basement prices. Prices are set according to the height of the tree, from 20 to 800 yuan — the smallest in a flowerpot is just 5 yuan. Whatever you want is available, bargains are plentiful, so come on down and get Christmas off to a very merry start!

Where: No.9 Maizidian Xilu, Chaoyang District
Open: 9 am – 5:30 pm **Tel:** 6463 6554



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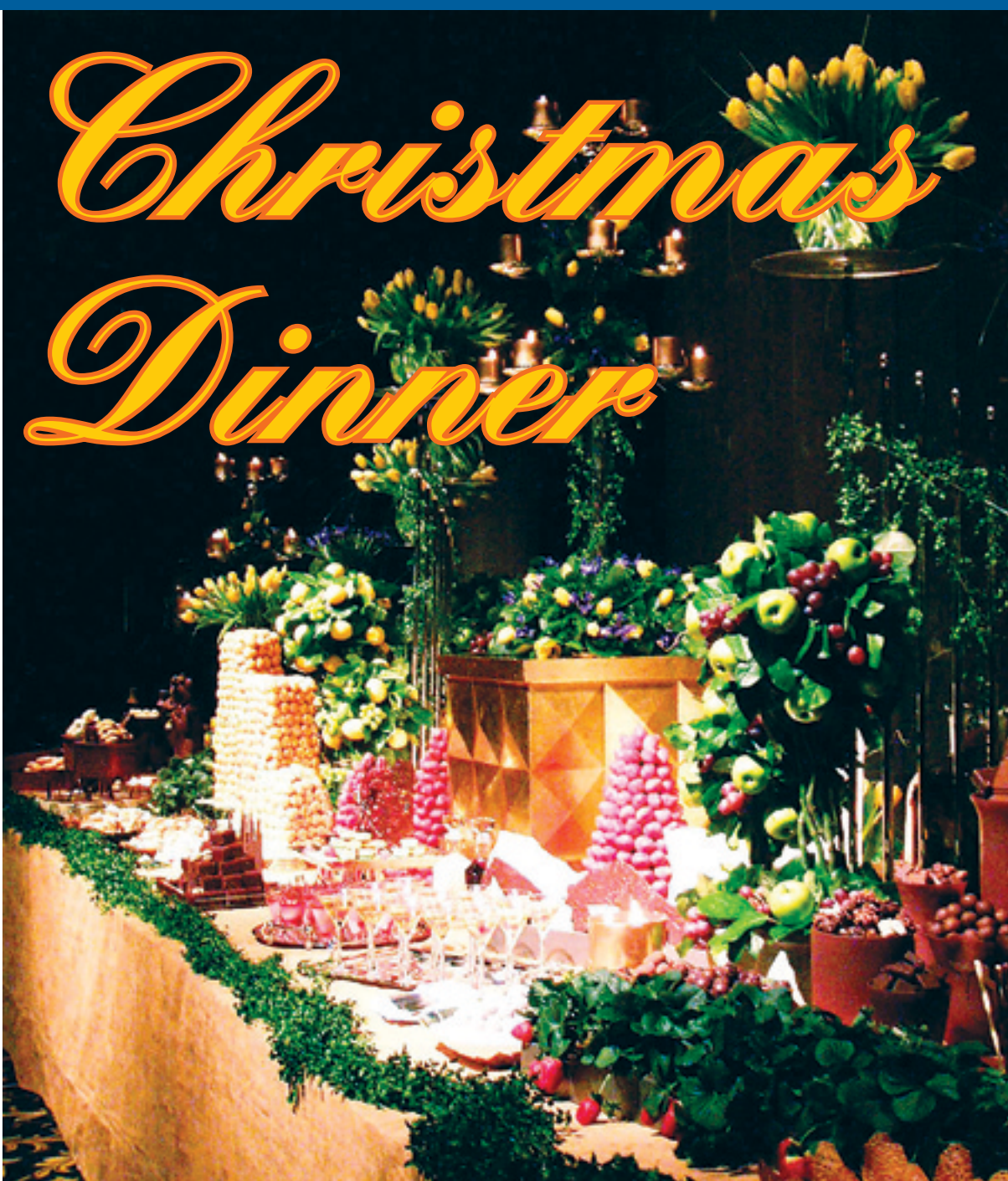
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Ask anyone about what the most popular food to stave off the winter cold in North China is and most people will reply "hotpot". But is there anything that can compete with the mighty hotpot to help beat those winter blues? A serious contender is a newcomer to the capital in the cuisine stakes, waguan, or dishes cooked in a kind of one-handed clay or earth pot, not to mention the more traditional casserole. Though a casserole is a little different in both taste and methods of cooking, it can be put into the same category with earth pot dishes, and some would say it is even tastier. And while casserole dishes have been around for over 300 years, clay or earth pot dishes are a relative upstart, arriving in the capital a mere four years ago.

Generally, clay pot dishes are less spicy, with a wider variety than hotpot, and considered to be beneficial to health, as many of them are cooked with wild medicinal herbs and sometimes rare fungus. It was businessmen from Hubei, Hunan, Sichuan and Jiangxi provinces who first introduced earth pot dishes to a willing capital. For those who prefer a traditional western Christmas dinner, most of the big hotels are hosting a Christmas party or meal over the holidays. But if you want to go Chinese - try one of these new versions of the traditional winter hotpot.



Photos provided by Grand Hyatt Beijing

CHINESE STYLE

By Wenlong Shaguou Restaurant

Located in the bustling business region of Xisi, Shaguou Restaurant is the one and only restaurant serving casserole dishes in the city. Opened in 1741, during the Qing Dynasty, the restaurant is listed as one of the best restaurants by the Beijing Tourist Administration together with Quanjude Peking Duck Restaurant, although it is nowhere near as famous as the latter.

The signature dish of Shaguou is meat which has firstly been boiled in plain water, and then served in a casserole with vegetables and sauce (*shaguo bairou*), and at 20 yuan, enough to fill two people. This dish became famous when Emperor Qianlong ordered the chef of Shaguou to cook it for him in the Imperial Palace. Even the present day owners still firmly believe that the 89-year old emperor's longevity should be attributed to their dish.

In the past the restaurant only served pork selected from carefully fed pigs. With the enlargement of its business, casseroles made with mutton and beef were added to the menu. Now the restaurant offers more than 100 different kinds of casseroles cooked with a large variety of ingredients, from abalone to shark fins.

Another feature of the restaurant is casseroles made with pig's tripe and chitterlings. It may sound a bit distasteful, but the chefs thoroughly clean the tripe and chitterlings before preparing and serving. A 19-centimeter wide casserole enough to feed three costs just 32 yuan.

Other specialties of the restaurant are braised shark fins in casserole (20 grams of shark fins), 80 yuan; and braised stichopus japonicus (a kind of sea cucumber) in casserole, 90 yuan. The best accompaniment for casseroles dishes is sesame seed cakes, and not rice.

Add: No.60 Xisi Nandajie, Xicheng District **Open:** 11am - 10pm **Tel:** 6602 1126 **Average cost:** 40 to 50 yuan per person

Shusheng Wagang Restaurant
Four man size earthen-ware pots placed outside the entrance are the eye-catching introduction to this restaurant. This restaurant was one of the first to introduce earth pot cuisine into the city. The canny owner, Yu Xuemei is an attractive Sichuan woman with 16 years experience in the industry.

The restaurant sits on the second floor of a roadside building with plenty of parking space. The waitresses, who all have pigtails, give very friendly and attentive service.

One of its signature dishes is agaricus blazei (a kind of pine

Waguan - The New Hot Pot Pot



Photos by Zhuang Jian

mushroom) soup braised with hazel grouse in a clay pot (*songrong feilongtang*), costing 138 yuan. Agaricus blazei is believed by people to have protective powers against electromagnetic radiation. Yu Xuemei's hometown is one of the two best agaricus blazei producing regions of the country. The delicacy can cost up to 800 yuan per kilogram. "All the fresh agaricus blazei are exported to Japan and we can only get the dried ones," Yu told *Beijing Today*.

"People get busier and busier and have no time to cook soup at home. However, drinking clay pot braised soup is very helpful to people's health. So I decided to open such a shop three years ago when I settled down in Beijing," continued Yu.

The success of the restaurant showcases her talent and experience. Every month she introduces a new series of dishes. In

December the new series is spicy-hot (*pola* series) and customers who order from this series of dishes can enjoy discount prices.

Besides the clay pot dishes, stewed chicken with pepper and mushrooms (*wawaji*) is worth a try. The dish, served in an iron pan the size of a washbasin, is sure to fill four diners at the price of 68 yuan. Fried preserved egg yolk with corn, a home-made dish of the restaurant is 18 yuan.

Add: No.35 Nannao-shikou Dajie, Xicheng District **Open:** 9:30am - 2:30pm; 4:30pm - 10:30pm **Tel:** 6607 2998 **Average cost:** 40 yuan per person

Laoyuanzi Restaurant

Laoyuanzi, meaning "old courtyard" in English, is a Jiangxi style

restaurant that opened in June opposite Ganjiakou department store. Jiangxi cuisine, also known as *gan cai*, features salty and fresh cuisine, but still with a hot flavor. The opening of Laoyuanzi Restaurant offers a new choice for diners fed up with spicy hotpot and greasy roast duck.

Along with the chefs, who are all the real deal from Jiangxi, the owner of the restaurant also brought the full set of tableware - in- digo cups, plates, bowls and tooth pick containers from Jingdezhen, the renowned chinaware capital. Even the four large 100-kilograms or so earthen jars were imported into this 900 square-meter eatery. The big parent jar can contain about 40 small pots with a charcoal fire in the middle.

Seafood, vegetables, chicken, spare ribs, and mushroom are all very tasty when cooked in this way. "We use barreled pure water in cooking the pot dishes because our chefs believe the mineral contents in pipe water reduce the taste of the dish," claimed one manager named Sun.

Also according to manager Sun, this method of cooking originated from around Jiangxi. In the past, woodmen would take their uncooked lunch in a pot when they set out to cut wood in the mountains. Before they started working, they would leave the jar on a wood fire and then as they went back at noon, the food would be well cooked and still warm. Gradually this kind of cooking became popular in Jiangxi as well as neighboring Hunan and Sichuan provinces.

"That's why so many Sichuan, Hubei and Hunan style restaurants in the city boast their authentic earth pot dishes," said Sun.

Jiangxi is known for three food specialties, rocktripe, a kind of fungus, (*shi'er*), chukar, which is a non-water living frog, (*shiji*) and stonefish (*shiyu*). Except the latter, you can find these in the restaurant. A chukar pot (*waguan shiji*) sells for 78 yuan and can be shared comfortably by three diners with a little to spare. An unusual combination of inkfish and sparerib pot (*mouyu paigu waguan*), 28 yuan, can really bring a new taste sensation. Pork meat cooked with rocktripe Lushan style (*lushan shi'er huarou*) is far more delicious than pork meat cooked with ordinary fungus and contains more nutrition. The restaurant has seven separate rooms for customers to reserve, but the open seats offer a better view and family atmosphere.

Add: first floor underground, No. 41 Baiwanzhuang Dajie, Xicheng District **Open:** 11am - 2pm; 5pm - 9:30pm **Tel:** 6833 2811; 6833 3813 **Average cost:** 30 yuan per person

Churenju Restaurant (The Wise Man's Restaurant)

Though this Hubei style restaurant is the smallest one of those reviewed today, it has a much grander sounding name, The Wise Man's Restaurant. It also cannot match with other big Hubei style restaurants in size, such as Jiutouniao, but it does offer authentic Hubei cuisine at reasonable prices.

For clay pot cuisine, this restaurant only makes one kind, the all-yellow chicken pot (*sanhuanji waguan*), priced reasonably at 28 yuan. Only chickens which have yellow feathers, beaks and claws can be selected for the dish. "The reason we only choose all-yellow chicken is to assure the taste and color of the dish," said chef Xiao from Jingzhou, Hubei Province. The chicken is stewed with Chinese dates, *dang-shen* (Codonopsis pisolula), Chinese angelica and Chinese wolfberry seeds and is believed to be useful in building vital energy and nourishing the blood.

Other specialties in the restaurant include beefsteak cooked in an iron pot (*xiangguo niupai*) sold at 38, 48, or 58 yuan according to the size and steamed rice Hubei style served with abalone sauce at eight yuan. "This is the only place in the city that you can try the rice," adds chef Xiao.

Add: Building 3, No.19 Yuetan Nanjie, Xicheng District **Open:** 9am - 2pm; 4:30pm - 9pm **Tel:** 6804 8903 **Average cost:** 25 yuan person

WESTERN STYLE

By Wesley Lei / Wenlong

Grand Ballroom Grand Hyatt Beijing

Sipping Moet & Chandon with fine canapés to match; Caipirinha and Mojitos introduce a tropical flavor, leading to a night at the sumptuously decorated themed Grand Ballroom that has been transformed into a Tropical Paradise with shows by a 10 piece band, Caliente Ritmo Latino. Plus exciting lucky draw. **Cost:** 988 RMB (plus 15% service charge) **When:** 6:30pm, Dec. 24 **Tel:** 6510 9530

Conference Hall and Ballroom China World Hotel

In addition to cuisine from the Americas, the International Gala Buffet will feature the best flavors from around Asia, including Japanese, Singaporean and Malaysian dishes, not to mention the special Beijing Food Street with the best that China has to offer. **Cost:** RMB1,288 net per person. **When:** 6:30pm December 24 **Tel:** 65052266 ext.6350

Grand Ballroom Kerry Centre Hotel

Superb entertainment with music from JP Miles Jazz band, Sichuan famous changing face act, acrobatic performances and a fashion show designed for the evening. Be the lucky winner and take home one of the many exciting prizes. **Cost:** RMB1,188 net **When:** 6:30pm onwards, Dec. 24 **Tel:** 6561 8833 ext. 6220/6333

Christmas Extravaganza Hilton Beijing

Unlimited discreet selections of wines, beers and non-alcoholic beverages as well as entertainment and exciting lucky draw prizes. **Cost:** RMB688 for Dec. 21 and RMB888 for Dec. 24, inclusive of service charge and tax. **When:** 6pm onwards Dec. 21 & 24 **Tel:** 6466 2288 ext. 7370

Christmas Eve Buffet Party Jianguo Hotel

House band from the Philippines and a variety of local entertainment. A spectacular buffet dinner of traditional cuisine, free flowing soft drinks, local beer and local wine at the Café Greenery, the Four Seasons, the Lobby. Lucky Draw tickets with the chance to win prizes. **Cost:** RMB888 net; Children RMB588 net below 12 years old **When:** 6:30pm onwards, Dec. 24 **Tel:** 6500 2233 ext. 8124

Grand Ballroom Harbour Plaza

The evening is filled with exciting musical entertainment programs. Plus, you'll get the chance to win prizes including a 43" flat screen TV at the Grand Lucky Draw. **Cost:** RMB588 net per person, inclusive of free flowing local soft drinks and beer **When:** 6:30pm onwards **Tel:** 6436 2288 ext. 2600/2617

Salsa Cabana Christmas Eve Dance Party Kempinski Hotel

Beijing's "Party & Dance Zone". The festive season begins with South American Band "Fuego Latino" and a special three-course Christmas' Eve Set Dinner. **Cost:** RMB688 net per person including free flow beer, wine and soft drinks **When:** 9pm Dec. 24 **Tel:** 6465 3388 ext. 5700

French Bistro The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing

Start the night with "Caramelized Goose Liver on Fried Papaya with a Lemon Infusion", move on to "oven Roasted Mandarin Fillets on Sweet Potatoes with corn", and complete the evening with "Castro's Favorite: The Smokeless Cigar". **Cost:** RMB588 net per person **When:** 6pm onwards, Dec. 24 **Tel:** 6590 5566 ext. 2119

Cafe Renaissance Jing Guang New World Hotel

A spectacular Christmas buffet, unlimited beer and soft drinks, live entertainment and party favors, and a superb Lucky Draw. **Cost:** RMB528 net per person; Children under 12 years old, RMB 268 net per person **When:** 6:30 pm - 10:30pm, December 24 **Tel:** 6597 3388 ext. 2513

Grand Ballroom Holiday Inn Lido Beijing

Celebrate in grand style with wonderful performances, the Lido Choir, a delicious buffet and lucky draw prizes of a COMPUTER or a 9-day trip to Australia! **Cost:** RMB788 per person, Children 4-12 years old are given 50% discount **When:** 6:30pm, Dec. 24 **Tel:** 6437 6688 ext. 2883

Tianlun Plaza Tianlun Dynasty Hotel

The party will be hosted by a famous compere, with stunning performance of top models, stars and pop singers. **Cost:** RMB1,688 per person and RMB 2,288 VIP **When:** 7pm-9pm Christmas Evening Feast and 8:30pm-12pm Christmas Party, Dec. 24 **Tel:** 6513 8888 ext.8077/8223

Rose Mallow New Otani

Changfugong Hotel

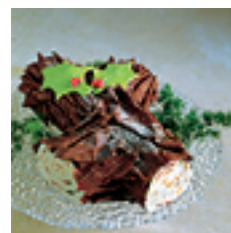
Chinese, Western and Japanese style Christmas dinner buffet. Watch performances and try your luck in their lottery draw. The first prize is seven day double person Australia tour. **Cost:** VIP section RMB1,088; Common section RMB988 children ticket RMB 528 (under 1.3m) **When:** 7pm - 11pm Dec. 24 **Tel:** 6512 5555 ext.1153

Bai He Grand Ballroom Jinglun Hotel

Live entertainment, a long list of fabulous prizes in the lucky draw. Listen to Christmas carols sung by the Jinglun Hotel Children's Choir. **Cost:** Complimentary party favors RMB988 net per person. **When:** 7pm - 0:30am, Dec. 24 **Tel:** 6500 2266 ext. 61

Ballroom/Rainbow/Sunshine Beijing International Hotel

Dance into the night and see their dynamic show of live entertainers. Lucky draw prize includes a notebook computer, digital camera, washing machine ... **Cost:** RMB988 net per person, RMB668 net per child under 1.3m **When:** 6:30pm - 0am Dec.24 **Tel:** 6512 6688 - Lobby Christmas



Behind Christmas

Although Christmas is not a national holiday in China, it is a cheerful festive which more and more local people are starting to enjoy. It's a time for sending greeting cards, dining out for a taste of western-style food, and maybe going to mid-



Xuanwumen Catholic Church

night mass. Going to one of Beijing's churches will put you in touch with the original meaning behind the festivities.

Xuanwumen Catholic Church

Xuanwumen Church, built in the 17th century, is the oldest Catholic church in China. It will hold a Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

Where: 141 Qianmen Dajie, Xuanwu **When:** December 24, 11:30-1 pm **Tel:** 6603 7139

Chongwenmen Church

Christmas services will also be held here.

Where: 32 Hougou Hutong, Chongwen **When:** December 24, 11 pm **Tel:** 6524 2193

Activities



Dolphin at play

Have a Dolphin Christmas

Many wonderful activities await, including a fireworks show, short films, a dolphin and sea-lion show and a lucky draw, as well as wonderful food.

Where: Beijing Aquarium **When:** December 24, 6 pm **Admission:** 588, 888, 1188 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7674 ext 508

Wonderful Winter

The 8th Ice and Snow Festival in Yanqing County, north of Beijing promises to be the best yet. There are participants from 10 countries across the world. This year's festival is sponsored by several famous travel sites including Badaling Great Wall, Longqingxia Gorges and Kangxi Grassland.

Where: Yanqing, north of Beijing **When:** December 25-February 28 **Route:** take Bus 919 from Deshengmen on the north second road or drive along Badaling Highway.

Spinning Time

Wonderful figure skating in a sparkling and crystal-clear ice stadium will lead you into a romantic fairy tale. The Latin dance is full of passion, and there will be charming children's performances.

Where: First floor, China World Hotel **When:** December 24, 7-12 pm **Admission:** 50, 100 yuan **Tel:** 6505 5776

Performance

Musical Drama Notre Dame de Paris

Notre-Dame de Paris, based on Victor Hugo's tale of Quasimodo and Esmeralda, has been a phenomenal success since it was unleashed on the French-speaking world two years ago. The musical is the creation of lyricist Luc Plamondon and composer Richard Cocciante, who have both won numerous awards for their work. The show has been seen by over two million people and the album has sold over seven million copies.

Where: The great hall of the people **When:** December 20-23, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 200-1,680 yuan **Tel:** 6592 8449, 6594 9460



Left to right: Esmeralda, Quasimodo, Frolo, Phoebus

Parties

Christmas Masses

The Canadian Embassy is organizing two Christmas Masses: one on Christmas Eve and the other on Christmas morning. Only foreign passport holders are allowed into the Canadian Embassy to celebrate Mass.

Where: Canadian Embassy, 28 Sanlitun, Chaoyang **When:** December 24, 5:30 pm and December 25, 11 am **Tel:** 6532 2132

Cheer Up

It is time to take advantage of the party spirit in the bars. MIX club provides cool décor, hot dance music and amazing prizes.

Where: MIX club, North Gate of Worker's Stadium **When:** December

24-25, 6 pm **Admission:** 80, 160 yuan **Tel:** 6530 2889, 6530 2689

Hip Hop Showcase

Featured performers will include SIDE B, Korea's hottest hip hop trio, and EXPRESSION 2002 International Break Dance Champions. Plus guest MCs and DJs from Korea.

Where: the Loft **When:** December 20, 9:30 pm **Admission:** 100 yuan presale, 150 yuan at the door **Tel:** 13601 080390

Joyous Nights

Several rock bands will do their thing on Christmas Eve. Scream Records presents an evening of music in celebration of the birth of baby Jesus.

Where: Get Lucky, 500 meters east of the south gate of University of International Business and Economics, Chaoyang **When:** November 24, 25, 9 pm **Admission:** adults 40 yuan, students 20 yuan **Tel:** 6429 9109, 6420 4249



A festival gift

Enjoy Holiday

Guest DJs join Rude, Elf and Sly Nose to provide the soundtrack. Also enjoy a lucky draw and plenty of Santa's little presents to add to the festive atmosphere.

Where: Vics, inside Workers Stadium north gate, Chaoyang **When:** December 24 and 25, 9 pm **Admission:** 150 yuan **Tel:** 6593 6215

Plus Christmas Party

PLUS pumps up the party action just in time for Christmas. Inviting the father of all Technasia beats, Amil Khan to grace the Beijing decks, supported by PLUS' own DJ Mickey.

Where: Location TBA **When:** December 20, 10 pm **Admission:** 100 yuan **Tel:** 13901 168546, 13011 036963

Rock Style

It will be a rockin' night this Christmas. Enjoy rock music from AK 47, Armory, Twisted Machine, Collapse and Masturbation.

Where: Starting bar, opposite the west gate of Beijing Space and Aviation University, Haidian **When:** December 24, 9 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 8233 2264

Hit the Booze

The Cappuccino bar will have a performance by the High Frequency Band, a tribute band from the Philippines who have become popular in Beijing. Along with that there will be dancers performing different traditional dances as well as professional dancers from Xinjiang Province.

Where: Cappuccino Bar, north end of Sanlitun bar street, Chaoyang **When:** December 25 **Admission:** 100 yuan **Tel:** 6417 7035

Relax Tonight

Come along with your friends for a relaxing Christmas evening! What do we have for you? Kir welcome cocktail, All you can eat dinner buffet, free flow of alcohol, including selected cocktails and live Jazz music

Where: Hoxleys 2, Gongti Nanlu, Chaoyang **When:** December 25, 5:30-9:30 pm **Admission:** 100 yuan **Email:** huxleys10rmb@mail.com **Tel:** 6592 9155

Latin Night

A night of Latin dance, music, food and fun at Latinos

Where: South gate of Chaoyang park, 1 Nongzhangguan Lu **When:** December 24 and 25, 8 pm **Tel:** 6507 9988

Fancy Ireland

Beat the homesickness with live music, games and lucky draws, and have a bite of the pumpkin pie

Where: PJ O'Reiley's, Henderson Center, 18 Jiangguomennei Dajie, Chaoyang **When:** December 24 and 25, 7 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 6559 4218



Bottoms up

Movies

Modern Times

In a city in present day Guangdong Province, an old woman is neglected by her son who is too busy making money to take care of her. She is sent to live with a housekeeper. At first the two women cannot get along, but gradually become close friends. In Chinese with English subtitles.

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 21 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** December 20-21, 8 pm **Admission:** 40 yuan **Tel:** 6430 1398



Maggie Cheung

Hero

Directed by Zhang Yimou, Starring Jet Li, Chen Daoming, Zhang Manyu, Tony Leang and Zhang Ziyi. At the height of China's warring states period, the Kingdom of Qin is the most determined to dominate. The Qin Emperor has long been the target of assassins from the six other states. There are three legendary assassins, Broken Sword, Flying Snow and Sky and the Emperor promises great power to anyone who can defeat the three. The enigmatic county sheriff, Nameless, defeats the three assassins at last. Sitting only ten paces from Nameless, the Emperor is impatient to hear his story...

Where: local cinemas **When:** December 20

Tokyo Story

Directed by Yasujiro Ozu. The story tells how a family must adapt to changes in the society of modern cities. In Japanese with Chinese subtitles

Where: Space for Imagination **When:** December 21, 7 pm **Admission:** 5 yuan **Tel:** 6297 1280

Exhibitions

From Traditional to Contemporary

The exhibition features ink paintings by Jia Haoyi, Li Xiaoke, Yang Gang and Han Shuli, who are prolific and accomplished artists. Li Xiaoke specializes in traditional ink paintings of landscapes and figures.

Where: Creation Gallery, North end of Ri Tan Dong Lu, Chaoyang **When:** December 21-January 1, 10 am-7 pm **Tel:** 8561 7570.

Pace of the Century

An international painting exhibition displays 70 works by 60 Chinese and foreign painters from the last century. These paintings present the progress of social development and the progress of urbanization over the last 100 years.

Where: 2 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang **When:** till December 30, (Monday-Friday, 12 am-4 pm, Weekend, 3-9 pm) **Tel:** 5100 0336

Ice Sculpture Show

This ice sculpture show is the first in Beijing this winter. All the sculptures are by craftsmen from Harbin, Heilongjiang Province.

Where: Badaling Ice and Snow Exhibition Hall **When:** till January 1, 8 am-5 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:** 6912 1596

Silk Road New Wave

Zhang Yongxu has held successful solo exhibitions in New York, San Francisco, Beijing and Shanghai. This exhibition features paintings of Silk Road.

Where: the Z&A Gallery, wangjing Xiyuan, Chaoyang **When:** till December 22 **Tel:** 6471 1700



Yan Dai Hutong by Kuang Han

Preserve Our Hutongs - Sketches by Kuang Han

Hutongs, for many people, are a quintessential element of Old Beijing. Many courtyard houses once dotted the hutongs that spread throughout the city. The exhibition brings 30-odd sketches of hutongs featuring a disappearing way of life. The artists will be available to answer questions and will be selling signed copies of their books.

Where: Wanfung Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie Dongcheng **When:** December 20-27 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6523 3320



Ink painting by Li Xiaoke

New Year's Exhibition

An exhibition of Song, Ming and Qing Dynasty New Year pictures, woodcuts and embroidery from Shanxi, Henan Shengdong and Zhejiang Province.

Where: Qin Gallery, Huaweili Enjoy Paradise1-1E (North of Beijing Curio City) Chaoyang **When:** December 23-31, 9:30 am-7 pm **Tel:** 8779 0461

Lao Dao's Solo Exhibition

By using mixed media, Lao Dao has created a unique style in expressing his deep understanding of Chinese culture through his paintings. The materials he uses are original pieces of history, such as calligraphy copied from ancient tablets, Chinese silk, seals, and even the imperial edicts. His paintings provide an visual of Chinese history.

Where: Phoenix Artist Workshop, Fenghuangcheng, A-5 Shuguang Xili, Chaoyang **When:** till December 31, 9 am-5 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8440 6991, 13901 170791

Sports

Going Underground

Visit the war tunnels, which were built to help in the guerrilla war with the Japanese. As it turned out, the tunnels were never used, but they are here to this day. They make an interesting, if slightly weird place to go on a rainy day.

Where: Pinggu, east of Beijing **When:** December 22, 8:30 am outside Starbucks at Lido Hotel, 9 am at Capital Paradise front gate **Admission:** adults 150 yuan, children 100 yuan **Tel:** 13701 003694 **Email:** bjhikers@yahoo.co.uk



Aaaarghh!

Ski Competition

A Beijing Shijinglong Expats Ski competition will be held at Shijinglong Ski Slopes on December 21. The competition is only open to foreigners in Beijing. Prizes include snowboards, ski suits and jackets. Buses leave downtown at 8:30 am and reach Shijinglong at 9 am. You can take part in the competition or simply enjoy a leisurely day. And you can also drive to the destination yourself and sign up temporarily.

Where: Shijinglong Ski Slopes **When:** December 21 **Cost:** 300 yuan, including transportation, lunch, afternoon tea and rental for ski equipment. **Email:** mrlijing @263.net **Tel:** 6492 4488 ext 2305, 13611 160678

Stage

Myriad Twinkling Tights

Directed by Lin Zhaoehua and starring Pu Cunxi, Song Dandan and Yang Lixin. The play reveals the joys and sorrows of the lives of common people.

Where: Capital Theatre, 22 Wangfujing Dajie **When:** December 20-January 21, 2003 **Admission:** 80-280 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7674 ext 508

Cui Hua Shang Suan Cai

New Year comedies are coming to the Beijing stage. The story of Cui Hua Shang Suan Cai is about a boy who surfs the Internet looking for a girlfriend to share his apartment with. Unfortunately he gets two boys instead.

Where: Chang'an Grand Theatre **When:** December 24-29 **Admission:** 100-360 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7674 ext 508

Opera Collection

Programs include Hujia Village, Qing Xianglian and Chun Chao Chuang Tang, performed by Hubei Opera Theatre.

Where: Chang'an Grand Theatre **When:** December 20 **Admission:** 60-800 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7674 ext 508



A poster for Cui Hua Shang Suan Cai

Music

Theme Songs of Hollywood Movies

Title Themes from classics such as *Gone with the wind* and *Around the World in 80 Days*. Performed by Hollywood Festival Orchestra.

Where: The Great Hall of The People **When:** December 25, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 120-980 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7750 ext 508

Religious Concert

Many famous Christmas songs will be performed by the China National Opera. With Zhao Qixiong playing the piano, young singers Shen Yun, Li Jingshun, Shun Shali and Bao Jinghui will sing solos, duets and choral pieces including *White Christmas*, *Jingle Bells*, *Silent Night* and *Ode to Maria*.

Where: National Library Concert Hall **When:** December 21, 2: 30 pm **Admission:** 30, 20, 10 yuan **Tel:** 6842 2047

A Merry Christmas in Beijing

Well-known songs in Chinese and English by the Mu Lan choir.

Where: the Forbidden City Concert Hall **When:** December 21, 2 pm **Tel:** 6528 7750

Golden Music for Christmas Eve

Well-known western Christmas songs will be performed by China National Opera.

Where: Poly Theater **When:** December 24, 10:30 pm **Tel:** 6528 7750



ABBA MAX

ABBA MAX vocal concert

Swedish quartet Abba made pop history and put their country on the international music map. Now, tribute band ABBA MAX will come to Beijing to perform old favorites such as "Dancing Queen", "Waterloo" and "Winner takes it All".

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theatre **When:** December 24-25, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80-500 yuan **Tel:** 6528 7673 ext 198

Minority Concert

The Central Minority Folk Music Orchestra will stage a concert showcasing instruments such as the Mongolian Matouqin, a bowed stringed instrument. Chinese minority musicians will play *Ten Thousand Horses Galloping*, *Jingpo Mountain Ballads* and *Holy Songs from the Snowy Regions*.

Where: National Library Concert Hall **When:** December 20, 7: 30 pm **Admission:** 30-150 yuan **Tel:** 6842 2047

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By Guo Yuandan

By Chen Jie/Jerry Ho

It's well known that there is a College Street in Beijing where a lot of modern colleges and universities are located. Another college street in the north-east corner of Beijing is not so well-known but it is the site of the Kong Miao (孔庙 the Royal Temple of Confucius) and Guo Zi Jian (国子监 the Imperial College of the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties). It is called Cheng Xian (another name for Confucius) or Guo Zi Jian Street.

At the main gate of the temple there stand two steles (下马碑) inscribed with the words "Everybody Dismounts Here" in Chinese and five other minority languages, indicating the stature of the road in ancient times.

Guo Zi Jian was built in the Yuan Dynasty and was the center of the highest educational administration and college in China during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. Emperors of the Qing Dynasty would come here to give lectures following their coronation and top students and scholars used to come here for study and research, including many visiting students from foreign countries.

Guo Zi Jian is a quiet yard with trees growing abundantly. The main hall, Pi Yong Hall (辟雍), is in the center of the yard, surrounded by a pool. This design is based on a legend which told of deities giving lectures in a hut on a small island. So Pi Yong Hall was built to mimic the effect: it is surrounded by water and when all its doors are opened, it's supposed to look like a hut on an island.

When emperors gave their lectures, ministers and scholars would listen outside the hall. With the lack of any method of amplifying the emperor's voice in ancient times, officials would stand by the side of the emperor and repeat aloud everything the emperor would say. Another reason the hall is celebrated is that famous author Lu Xun used to make a living by sorting and tidying books and documents stored in the hall.

Visitors are sometimes curious about where the water comes from. In a pavilion at the entrance of Guo Zi Jian there are two wells and now the one still produces water. In order to keep the water in the pool surrounding the Hall clean, maintenance people pump water from the well and use the underground water tunnels to channel it to the pool.

The rooms to the west of the yard used to be classrooms of Guo Zi Jian. Now they belong to the Young People's Library of Beijing. Every afternoon, many middle school students come here to read or do their homework.

The Temple of Confucius

Emperors of the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties used to have memorial ceremonies for



Confucius in the temple. In 1981 it was changed into the Capital Museum of Beijing but all the buildings remain in their original forms. The temple is a huge yard of 20,000 square meters. Memorial ceremonies used to be held in the Da Cheng (great achievement) Hall (大成殿). Two side rooms were built on either side of the Hall. One of them has become a display room for a "Brief History of Beijing". Under the Da Cheng gate there are 10 stone drums made during the reign of Emperor Qian Long.

198 steles bearing details of the "Jin Shi" (candidates for imperial examinations) also stand on either side of the Da Cheng gate. More than 50,000 people during the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties took the examinations and became Jin Shi. All of them have their names, where they came from and their positions inscribed on the steles. There are some famous names like Lin Zexu (an envoy for the emperor in the late Qing Dynasty who played a central role in the fight against Britain during the Opium Wars), Yu Qian (a famous general of the



Pi Yong Hall



Liu Xian Guan

Photos by Lin Hui

Ancient College Street

Ming Dynasty who resisted invasions by a northern tribe) and Yuan Chonghuan (a general of the late Ming who fought against the Manchu invasions).

A number of magnificent, centuries-old cypress trees are planted inside the Confucius Temple. A famous one is called Chu Jian (除奸柏). People believed that the tree had a human spirit and could tell bad from good. It is said the tree once lifted the cap from the head of Yan Song and dropped it, thereby exposing him as a corrupt man. Yan Song was a notoriously wicked minister of the Ming Dynasty. A small lake called Ink Lake (砚水湖) was named by Emperor Qian Long. According to the legend, if writers drank water from the Ink Lake, they would be never short of inspiration or ideas and they could easily pass the imperial examinations.

Shops

An atmosphere of quiet study still remains on the ancient college street of Guo Zi Jian and is reflected in many of the small shops. Apart from the three most famous tourist sites in the area -

Guo Zi Jian, the Confucius Temple and Yong He Gong, there are a few other places worth a visit.

A cartoon shop named Long Yi Yuan Chuang (龙裔元创卡通店) is located at the west entrance of the street. This is the first professional shop for cartoons in China. You can buy comics and have cartoon T-shirts made here.

A small teahouse called Liu Xian Guan (留贤馆 place for wise men) is opposite the Confucius Temple. A message left for the guests from its owner Taotao reads: please turn off your mobile phone. You can sit here drinking and eating nothing, but please don't miss the scenes outside the window - the quiet street, the grave buildings with red walls and green tiles, the magpies and the squirrels.

Next door to Liu Xian Guan is an art shop. Articles of folk art from Shanxi Province and toys made from cloth are available.

Nearby sites: Yong He Gong, Bai Lin Temple (柏林寺) and Di Tan park. There are a lot of other small shops selling traditional Chinese clothes, crafts and pictures in the nearby streets.

China Wide

By Wenlong

Travelers in China would probably head to Beijing to find remains of the country's imperial history. But for a look at the ancient lifestyle of ordinary Chinese, they might head for Yixian (义县) County. This quiet and secluded county at the foot of picturesque Huangshan Mountain in Anhui Province boasts some of China's best-preserved ancient villages.

Most of the old houses have been sitting in these villages for more than 400 years. Despite the dramatic changes outside, the local architecture has peacefully remained. Even the local dialect is unchanged. It remains unintelligible to those living just a few kilometers away in neighboring counties.

The old houses, mostly built in the 16th century, are still standing firmly, under the shade of the green hills.

Land of Peach Blossoms

There is one village that tourists should not miss, even in a tight schedule that allows only a brief visit. Xidi (西递) is acclaimed by tourists and scholars as one of the most beautiful villages in China. Its wealth of traditional Chinese architecture gained it a listing this August as a UN world heritage site.

Hidden Beauty of Yixian



A paifang in Shexian County

Located at the southeastern corner of Yixian County, the village has another name, "The

Land of Peach Blossoms" (桃花源), meaning a haven of peace. Tao Yuanming, a poet of the

Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), immortalized it in his famous poem Note of The Land of Peach Blossoms. The poem is about a fisherman who accidentally discovers a mysterious place where people live peacefully and forget the turmoil of the outside world. The fisherman returned home and later tried to find the special land again but was never able to do so. The mysterious place in Tao's poem was based on Xidi.

There used not to be any roads linking Xidi with the outside world. It was only accessible by boat, making the countryside all the more peaceful and tranquil.

According to history books, men in Xidi used to be famous for their business instincts. After earning good money outside, the sharp businessmen came back to their hometown and invested huge sums in building and decorating their houses.

This investment ensured the high quality of the houses, which has helped them survive all these years of erosion from rain and wind.

As most of the men were regularly away on business at that time, for the sake of security they built high walls around their courtyards, and didn't put windows in their



Traditional architecture

houses. People got their natural light through the yard doors.

Such a unique design formed a school of its own, known as huiju (Anhui Residence) in Chinese, one of the most famous architectural styles of the time.

On the corners of the houses tourists can find exquisite sculptures. Craftsmen carved flowers or other patterns representing good wishes into the doors, adding to the elegance and beauty of the houses.

Of particular interest is an ancient building called Xiulou, with a gilded balcony overhanging the street. In the past, young women would sit upstairs and from behind the carved wooden windows they would choose their future husband among the passing travelers. Today, a popular custom is for local beauties to dress up in ancient wedding gowns and throw colorful balls down to the crowds from the balcony. Those who are

lucky enough to catch the balls would have the chance to win the girls' love.

Ancient Arches

Another famous scenic spot in the village is the paifang (arch) of Hu Wenguang, an upright and honest official of the Ming Dynasty. The paifang was built in 1578, to commemorate this official.

Although hundreds of years have passed, the characters and patterns carved into the stone can still be clearly seen. The open lattice work and sweeping roof line add to the elegance of the huge structure.

More of this ancient architecture is located in Paifang Village in nearby Shexian County (歙县), some 45 minutes drive from Xidi Village. The village has some wonderful examples of paifang. Eight to ten ancient stone archways stand in a beautiful line, each with a story behind them.



An ancestral shrine